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TWELVE SERMONS

On the most INTERESTING SUBJECTS,
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
PREACHED UPON
SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

BY
HADDON SMITH,

Curate of St. Matthew, Bethnal-Green,

And late CHAPLAIN of His
MAJESTY'S SHIP the DREADNOUGHT.



L O N D O N,

Printed for the AUTHOR, and Sold by H. TURPIN,
Bookseller, at the Golden Key, St. John's Street, West-
Smithfield.

MDCC LXIX.

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HADDON SMITH

Curate of St. Matthew, Bishopsgate

And late Chaplain of His

Majesty's Ship the Dreadnought



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Printed for the Author, and Sold by H. Turpin,
at the Golden Age, in St. Dunstons Church-yard.

MDCCLXXX

To the worthy Inhabitants of the Parish of Saint Matthew, Bethnal Green, and to the rest of the generous Subscribers.

***** *THE following Sermons would have been
 * T * Published long ago, had not the Sub-
 * * * * * scriptions fell greatly short of my Ex-
 pectation; for the many discouragements
 I have met with, have given me too much Reason
 to repent of this Undertaking; especially as the
 taste of the Age seems greatly Averse to any thing
 published under the denomination of a Sermon.
 But I had gone too far to recede; and my Word
 was engaged to my Subscribers; or else I should
 certainly have given up all Thoughts of troubling
 the World with any thing that is Serious.*

*But now, since these discourses are come abroad
 into the World, I think it necessary to return my
 most grateful Acknowledgments to such as have
 generously Subscribed to my Book; and to assure
 them, that however Imperfect the Performance
 may be, yet the Discourses are well Meant; and
 I hope will prove Instructive. I could wish the
 Compositions were much Better: But I have this
 to say in their behalf, they have received the
 approbation of those whose Judgment I have no
 reason to mistrust. Sensible I am, that many*

works of this nature have appeared in Public to far greater Advantage than what is here offered to your Service ; but (what may be some Apology for my adding a few more to the Number) the same Subjects will always bear different Lights ; and there is a diversity of Tastes in Readers, which cannot so well be suited as by a diversity of Writers. Different kind of Dress please different sorts of People ; and that which attracts the Notice of one Person, may be overlook'd by another, so that if the Reader should find nothing New in this Performance, he will yet see that the Scriptures are faithfully Expounded, and the Language suitable to the meanest Capacity. And, though I have no fond Conceit of the Worth of the Performance, yet, I confess, I am not insensible to all thoughts of worldly Advantages ; nor am I of so abject a cast of Mind as to be below the influence of a laudible Ambition. As the supreme Being is often pleased to work by the meanest Instruments, so if through his Blessing, these Sermons should prove of Service to any one Person, it will give the greatest satisfaction to your greatly obliged, and devoted

Humble Servant,

Bethnal Green,
July 10, 1769.



HADDON SMITH.

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S E R M O N I.

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S E R M O N I.

B E I N G A N

ENQUIRY into the DIVINE ORIGINAL

O F T H E

H O L Y S C R I P T U R E S.



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Galatians i. 11, 12.

But I certify you, Brethren, that the Gospel which was Preached of me, is not after Man : — For I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

IN order to know what it was that induced St. Paul to write in this manner to the Galatians, we must have recourse to the Context ; which begins thus. — “Paul an Apostle, (not of Man, neither by Man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the Dead) and all the Brethren which are with me, unto the Churches of Galatia: Grace be to you, and Peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil World, according to the will of God and our Father : To whom be Glory for ever and ever, Amen. I marvel, that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ,

unto another Gospel; ie, it astonishes me greatly to find that yon have so soon deserted me, who called you to the glorious Gospel of Christ, wherein the means of Salvation and Happiness is offered you, and so precipitately betake yourselves to, what you apprehend to be, another Gospel; which is not another: But there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. It is not another Gospel, for there can be no Gospel but that which was revealed from Heaven; therefore, I entreat you, not to give any heed to them that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ.

But though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. This he repeats again in the verse following, and then says, "For do I persuade Men, or God?"

Do I endeavour to gain the applause of Men, by preaching such doctrines as are pleasing to carnal Minds, or do I preach the doctrines of God? Judge ye. Or do I seek to please Men? For if I yet pleased Men, I should not be the Servant of Christ. If I continued to please Men, as I did formerly, by being a strict Pharisee, how then can I be a Servant of Christ. But I certify you, Brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after Man, for I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

By

By all which it evidently appears, that even so early as the *Apostolic Age*, there were some who endeavoured to *pervert* the word of God, and had debauched the Minds of many of the *Galatians*. How careful then, should we be, in these days, to examine the *Doctrines* of those, of whom we have the least distrust, and not suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by ignorant or designing Men !

FROM the words of my Text, I shall endeavour to prove, that the *holy Scriptures* are the *revealed* word of God. In order to which, I shall

First, shew that the Testimony we have in their favour, is a sufficient Evidence of their *Divinity*.

And secondly, That their own intrinsic Excellence is a *confirmation* of it.

Then I shall conclude with such inferences, as the subject naturally suggests.

First, I am to shew that the Testimony we have, in favour of the holy Scriptures, is a sufficient Evidence of their *Divinity*.

But before I begin upon the Subject, I think it necessary to premise, that through both the *old* and *new Testament* is the word of God, and *both* written by inspired Men, as were *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and the four *Evangelists* ; yet I shall confine myself more particularly, to the *Gospel* of the *blessed Jesus* : because *one* being proved, necessarily proves the *other*.

Now

Now our *natural Reason* dictates to us, that there is a God: who must be a Being of *infinite Perfection, all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good*: And that the *World* was made by him; for we are sensible that no *meer Man* could bring *himself*, and such wonderful appearances of nature into *Existence*. And that this wise Being must be free from all *Impurity and Imperfection*, and of course, must be a *pure Spirit*; without any *bodily Parts or Passions*. For the *Body* is liable to *Corruption*, and therefore *imperfect*: And the *Passions* of human nature, are plain Indications of our *wants and imperfections*; and therefore cannot, with any propriety be attributed to God, who, as I said before, is *all-perfect*.

These we must suppose the dictates of *Reason*, without any regard to *Revelation*; because to pretend to prove the *Being and Attributes* of God from *Scripture*, before we have proved the *Authority* of *Scripture*, is arguing upon a bad Foundation, which will not bear such arguments to be built upon it. These then, being the principles of *Reason*, the Mind of Man can go no further, without a *divine Revelation*; and without a *Revelation* we must be utterly ignorant of the *Mind and Will* of God: Therefore, in many cases, must be doubtful of what is proper to be *done*, and very uncertain of the *Truth*.

It

It appears therefore, from the *Idea* we have of the *goodness* of God, that it must be consistent with his *other* Attributes to make a full discovery of his *Will*, for the improvement of our understandings. and the regulation of our *Faith* and *Practice*: Thus far *Reason* carries us.

To the Mind thus fairly disposed by *Reason*, *human Tradition* brings in its evidence, and declares, that *God at sundry times, and in divers manners, did speak in times of old, by his Prophets*, to the *Jews* in particular; and in latter days, both to *Jew* and *Gentile*, by his Son *Jesus Christ*. And also assures us, that the *Scriptures* were received by the *Jews* in *part*, and by *Christians* in the *whole*; ie, what we commonly call the *old Testament*, was received by the *Jews*; and that which goes under the name of the *new Testament*, together with the *old Testament*, was always received by *Christians*, as the *revealed Word of God*.

To this we may add the Testimony of the *holy Spirit*.

There are many things in these sacred writings *foretold*, which *History* assures us, are long since *accomplished*; many *Prophecies* in the old Testament, were *fulfilled* long before the *Gospel* was *revealed* to us; many *Predictions* were verified by the *Gospel*, and many things *foreshewn* in the *Gospel*, have since come to pass: And some *more*, it is still expected by the *Faithful*, will be fully accomplished in due time.

But

But says the *Deist*. How am I to be assured of the *truth* of all this? It is a sufficient *answer* to him, that we have as great certainty of their *truth*, as we have for the *truth* of any *other* history. He might say, with as much propriety, he will not believe there were such persons as *Oliver Cromwel*, or *Queen Elizabeth*, because he fears he may be imposed upon. And, if he was to say so, wou'd you not think him destitute of common Sense? * Why then, should we scruple to give our assent to the sacred Writings, upon as good evidence as we have for the truth of any *other* History?

Indeed, we have a stronger Evidence in *their* favour, than we have for the truth of any *other* writings; since it has not been in the power of any Man, no not even their greatest *Enemies*, from the day that they were first *published*, to this very day, to prove one *single* Fact to be *erroneous* or *false*: And we have *profane History* to

* None can demonstrate to me, that there is such an Island in America, as Jamaica; yet, upon the Testimony of credible Persons, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as from doubting of the clearest Mathematical Demonstration. So that this is to be entertained as a firm principle, by all those who pretend to be certain of any thing at all, that when any thing is prov'd by as good Arguments as that thing is capable of, and we have as great assurance that it is, as we could possibly have supposing it were, we ought not in reason to make any doubt of the existence of that Thing.

TILLOTSON.

to testify; that those memorable events which are recorded in the sacred Scriptures, did not happen in a *Corner*; but were well known to all the World. This is what I mean by the testimony of the *holy Spirit*; as none but an *all-seeing God*, can declare future events. I come now as was proposed, in the

Second place, to shew that the Scriptures, by their own *intrinsic Excellence*, confirm their Divinity.

As there never has been any body of *Laws*, so admirably contrived to enforce *Virtue*, and discountenance *Vice*, as those contain'd in the *Gospel*, it is reasonable to conclude that they are undoubtedly a true *Revelation* of the *Will* of God; and are the results of infinite Knowledge, and profound Wisdom. This will appear more clear, when we take a particular and distinct survey of them.

Thus the *doctrines* are so pure, so sublime, and spiritual, as plainly to demonstrate, that no *human Creature* cou'd ever *reveal* them; so mysterious, so perfectly Holy, that we must be convinced they never cou'd be the product of the fallible understanding of a *mere Man*; they are so profound, that the *Angels of Heaven* earnestly pry, and desire to look into them.

What a wonderful *Mystery* is the ever blessed *Trinity*! the unspotted *conception* and *incarnation* of the blessed *Jesus*; his humbling himself to stoop to the *infirmities* of human Nature;

his meritorious *Passion, Suffering, and Death* upon the *Cross* for lost Sinners; his glorious *resurrection from the Dead*, and triumphant *ascension into Heaven*; his future coming to *judge the World*, when all *Nations* shall be summon'd before him to answer for their *Actions*, and receive their just *Reward*! For *God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness.* Acts xvii. 31.

These are things greatly out of the reach of human Reason to *conceive*; and their *truth* cannot be destroy'd by the *malice* of the *Devil*, their greatest *Enemy*.

Again; When we examine the *practical* part of the Gospel, and find what *precepts* it propounds for the government of our *Lives* and *Actions*, we must be more fully convinced of its *divinity*; because every precept in it, tends to rectify the errors of Mankind, and promote their *Happiness*. And is not this worthy of the divine Being? Is not this in the highest Sense, *dignus vindice nodus*?

The Lawgivers of *Greece* and *Rome* never laid down any *System of Laws*, equal to those in the *new Testament*: Nor even *Moses* himself, among the *Jews*. For though the precepts of the Gospel, have their foundation in the *moral Law*, or *ten Commandments*, yet they add greater *light* and *dignity* to it; they improve *Morality* to a much higher *pitch*, than ever it was taught in any of the *Academies of Greece*, or *Synagogues* of
of

of the *Jews*. It restrains our most inward *thoughts*, as well as our outward *actions*.

Solon, nor *Lycurgus*, the Lawgivers of *Greece*, nor *Numa*, of *Rome*, nor even *Moses* among the *Jews*, never taught their *Disciples*, that *Heart-Revenge* was *Murder*; that a wanton *Glance* was *Adultery*, and that a man might be criminal in his *Heart* without proceeding to the outward *Act*.

But in the *Gospel*, we learn better things. There is not a Precept in it, but what commands *Virtue*, or forbids *Vice*, even in the least degree imaginable. This will appear very plain to those who make the *holy Scriptures* their *Study*; and not only so, but when read with an *honest* and *good Heart*, it will produce its good *effects* on their *Minds* and *Practice*.

To conclude this particular, had we not the evidence of *Miracles* to confirm its Divinity, yet such is the exalted *tendency* of its precepts, that that alone is sufficient to *convince* us, that it came from an infinitely *wise* and *good Being*.

Again; if we look into the nature of the *rewards* and *punishments* mentioned in *Scripture*, we shall find that they are the most suitable, the most powerful *inducements* to a rational Creature, diligently to practice the *duties* it commands, and avoid those *vices* it forbids.

The all-wise and supreme God of nature, who perfectly understands the nature and disposition of his *Creatures*, has suited his *Sanctions*

the more effectually to work upon the *prevailing Passions* of our nature, the hopes of a most glorious reward, or the fears of an eternity of punishment.

What can be conceived more enticing, and desirable, or more conducive to engage us to the practice of *Virtue*, than the hopes and assurance of a blessed Reward in the regions of the Blessed? And what can be a more effectual motive to deter us from *Sin*, than the fear and certainty of future punishment with the Devil and his *Angels*?

If any thing can allay the heats and disorders of a distempered Soul, it must be the comfortable reliance upon the *promises* of God in *Christ Jesus*; and the want of these was the great defect of all Religions, 'till the Revelation of the Gospel of Christ: Therefore St. Paul may well certify us, in the words of the text, that *the Gospel which he preached was not after Man, for he neither received it of Man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

For let any man consider the state of the *heathen World*. Could they, by the dim light of nature, attain to the knowledge of a future state, and the rewards and punishments consequent upon it? No they could not. 'Tis true the more knowing sort of them did think that their Souls were immortal, and that they should descend into *Elysium*, a place where they should meet their old friends and relations; but all
their

their reasoning could never give them the least encouragement to hope for so great a reward as the Gospel propounds; because the services the best of Men can perform, are not adequate to so great a reward.

Phythagoras, Plato, and their Disciples, talked much about a state of future Happiness: But consider what a small number there was of these men, when compared with those who believed nothing at all of the matter. And what strength did their arguments carry with them? They were too weak, and very insufficient to reclaim a World grown old in *Vice and Wickedness*.

Go further, and look into the state of mankind under the dispensation of *Moses*, does it appear much more perfect? Very little: For tho' the Jews had several valuable Precepts, yet they were enforced by no express promises of eternal Life, nor threatnings of eternal Misery; nor did they know any thing of a life to come, but by the obscure intimations or traditions of their inspired Men. And that this was really the case, is evident from the sect of *Saducees*, which were very numerous among the Jews, who denied that there was either Resurrection, Angel, or Spirit: and the question which they put to our Saviour touching the Resurrection, plainly confirms it. But, blessed be God, the matter is now put beyond all doubt, by the appearance of our Redeemer, who hath brought life and immortality to light thro' the Gospel.

All

All this considered, have we not the greatest encouragement imaginable, to *live as becomes the Gospel of Christ*, in all *Soberness and Honesty*? What shall we say for ourselves if we *neglect so great Salvation*? Is *eternal punishment* then, too much for us? Too much for a Sinner who will seek his own *destruction*, in spite of all the warnings of the Gospel? No, if he *perishes*, it is no more than his desert. And he will be more inexcusable than a *Jew*, or a *Turk*, if he continues in his Sins, after all these glorious discoveries of the Gospel.

If he is not *bettered* by these means of Grace, what can he expect but a *fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation*? He has nothing to plead in his *excuse*, because his duty is plain. There is set before him *Life and Immortality*, as the reward of *Virtue*; and *Death and Hell*, as the consequence of *Vice*. His *Will* is free, so that it is in his power to chuse which he thinks most desirable; and though the *Devil* is his powerful *Enemy*, yet his Redeemer's *Grace is sufficient for him*; therefore if he *fails* of everlasting Happiness, the fault is in himself.

Again; Rules of *practice* are always the most excellent, when delivered in a style the most plain and simple. By this means, they will be universally understood, and become a public benefit. No writings then, are so worthy of that character as the *holy Scriptures*, wherein

wherein every *precept* is suitable to the capacity of the most Ignorant.

In human writings, even the most *correct* of them, you will find a great deal of vain and unprofitable argumentation, which, when compared with the *Scriptures*, is like holding a *Candle* to the *Sun*.

But in this divine book of Knowledge, every page glows with *purity* and *excellence*; every *Chapter*, every *Verse*, produces something *pleasing* and *instructive* to a pious Mind!

It may be objected, that there are many passages in the *Bible*, hard to be understood, and not within the *compass* of an *ordinary Capacity*. To this I say, that though there are passages in Scripture *obscure*, and not quite so *intelligible* to some, yet they are such as no way disturb the *truth*; but are *Historical*, or relate only to some rules of *practice* peculiar to the *times* in which they were *transacted*. But the *practical* part of our duty, as delivered in these sacred records, are very clear to the *lowest* understanding.

The terms of Salvation, are too *clear* to any man to form an *excuse* for the neglect of his duty, either to *God*, his *neighbour*, or *himself*. He can easily understand the meaning of such Scriptures as these. “*This is a true saying, and worthy to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save Sinners. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without holiness, no Man shall see the Lord.*” These are
so

so self-evident, that nothing but wilful and downright *obstinacy*, can hinder him from knowing what they mean. And it is such as these which make up the whole substance of the Gospel. We may therefore conclude with *St. Paul*, "*If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are lost, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them.*"

Again, we find every truth in the Gospel, enforced with the greatest *Authority* and *Affection*; with a just mixture of *Severity* and *Condescension*, so as the more effectually to work upon the mind of a reasonable Creature.

A vicious Man, that hardens himself in *Wickedness*, is there threaten'd with *eternal punishment*, in a lake of *Fire* and *Brimstone*, which burns for ever and ever. "*For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of Men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Rom. i. 18. Who shall be cast into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Mark ix. 26.*"

But a man that is Good, who does *Justly*, loves *Mercy*, and walks humbly with his God, is comforted by the glorious promises of living with God, and just men made perfect, to endless Ages. "*Those that are alive, says the Apostle, and remain, shall be caught up together*
with

with them into the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Again, what *tenderness* and *compassion* are in these words. “*Come unto me all ye that Labour and are heavy Laden: Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest unto your Souls. Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, but thou wouldest not! And, Oh that thou hadst known the things which belong to thy Peace!* Such tender and majestic Expressions, at once softly move the *Passions*, and strike conviction into the *Soul*.

From what has been said, we may rest assured, that the *Gospel* is not after Man, for St. Paul neither received it of Man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of *Jesus Christ*.

The Inferences that I shall draw from this discourse is, that since the *Gospel* evidently appears to be the inspired word of God; and as the terms of Salvation and Happiness are there revealed, it highly becomes those who value their greatest *Interest*, to regulate their Lives and Actions according to its *Precepts*.

Let no Man then say his *Faith* only shall save him. He must not think a bare belief of the truths of the *Gospel*, without *practical Holiness*, will bring him to *Heaven*; for, however he may deceive himself, “*God is not mocked, for whatsoever a Man soweth that shall he also reap.*

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His

His *Faith*, without it be *lively* and *operative*, will profit him nothing. If he will credit *Scripture*, he will find that *St. Peter* tells him, that a Man is *justified by Works, and not by Faith only*. Implying, that it is such a *Faith* as makes a Man fruitful in *good Works*, in his *Life* and *Conversation*: and not a bare *leaning upon Christ* for *Salvation*, whether we are *Wicked* or *Virtuous*.

A Man may talk plausibly about *Religion*, and tell you he believes that *Christ* will *save* him, and, at the same time, be a wicked *Pharisee*. But his *life* and *manners* must be *answerable* to his *Faith*, or else his nice *Arguings* and subtle *Reasonings* about *Religion* will profit him nothing.

It was not the design of the *Gospel* to make men Christians in *name*, but Christians in *deed* and *truth*; to teach them to get *Victories* over their *corrupt Inclinations*, and to subdue the *Flesh* to the *Spirit*. Wherefore, my Brethren, “*Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the fear of God*. And let us put a due *esteem* and *value* upon the *Scriptures*, as being verily persuaded that they are the *word of God*. Let us read them with *seriousness* and *consideration*, and talk of them with *reverence* and *simplicity*; and not, as is too much the case, make them the subject of *ridicule*. The *Contempt* they meet with from *Libertines* and *idle People*; and the scandalous

dalous *liberty* that many *Christians* (if they can be called such) have taken in *perverting* them to the most *wicked* purposes, is too well known.

Every intelligent person, will easily discover the fatal *Consequences* of the abuse of Scripture : for when a Man begins to lessen his *esteem* for them, he will not read them with that *seriousness* and *attention*, which is requisite in order to induce him to follow the *rules* they *prescribe* : and when once he makes them the standard of *wit* and *humour*, they will soon *cease* to be the rule of his *Life* and *Actions*.

But, my Brethren, I am persuaded better things of you. I know you believe the Gospel, and will rest satisfied with the assurance *St. Paul* has given you, that he received it by the *Revelation of Jesus Christ*.





S E R M O N II.

W H E R E I N T H E
D O C T R I N E of FAITH

I S

C L E A R L Y S T A T E D.



Mark, xi. 22.

Have Faith in G O D.

FAITH is undoubtedly the *essence* of Christianity. It is therefore, highly reasonable that we shou'd endeavour to get a *true notion* of it; and the more so, as it has been *misrepresented*, not only by weak Christians, but by ignorant and designing Men.

Malicious *Libertines* despise it, and make it the subject of *ridicule*. Weak *Christians* mistake it, and represent it in a very false and absurd Light.

Thus *Faith*, which is the principle *support* and *foundation* of *Religion*, suffers as much by its injudicious *Friends*, as it does by its malignant *Enemies*. The weak *Christian* gives himself up to a *blind Credulity* without *Reason* or *Consideration*, and is therefore justly termed an *Enthusiast*. The malicious *Libertine*, by an obstinate and capricious humour, denies every thing that wants the evidence of *Sense* to support it; and therefore, is very justly stiled a *Sceptic*. Now, in order that we may arrive to a *true notion*

tion of Faith, I shall make it the business of this discourse,

First, To shew what it is that we as *Christians*, are bound to believe.

Secondly, I shall point out wherein this doctrine of Faith is *misunderstood* by the *Friends*, and by the *Enemies* of Christianity.

Lastly, I shall conclude with some inferences suitable to the Subject.

First then, I am to shew what it is that we as *Christians*, are bound to believe.

In order to this, I shall take notice of several very remarkable instances of Faith, recorded in *Scripture* for our instruction. The 11th Chapter of *St. Pauls* Epistle to the *Hebrews*, treats intirely of *Faith*. It begins with telling us, that “*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*”

Now it is very evident, that the things hoped for by the *Patriarchs*, were the rewards that God had promised to the *upright*, as we shall see very plain, when we read this Chapter, which is as follows. “*By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a Place which he should after receive for an Inheritance, obey'd: Through Faith also, Sara had a Child when she was past Age, because she judged him faithful who had promised: By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come: By faith Jacob when he was a dying blessed both the Sons of Joseph: By faith Joseph when he died, made mention*

mention of the departing of the Children of Israel; i e he believed God, that he wou'd, notwithstanding they were then in Egypt, bring them into the Land of Canaan, as he had promised. " By faith, Moses refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter; chose to suffer Affliction, esteemed the reproach of Christ more than the treasures of Egypt: " By faith the Israelites passed through the red Sea: " By faith the walls of Jericho fell down: " By faith the Harlot Rabab was saved. And many other instances we have of Gideon, Barak and Sampson; of David also, and Samuel: " Who through faith subdued Kingdoms, stopped the mouths of Lions, turned Armies to flight, endured cruel mockings and scourgings, and wandered about clad in Skins of Sheep and Goats; of whom the world was not worthy, and for whom God had prepared a City. These are eminent instances of Faith. And did not this faith consist in a trust in the promises of God? yes, they believed him faithful who had promised, and they were not disappointed.

When Abraham, as we read in the 12th Chap. of Genesis, left his Country, and his kindred, and his Fathers House, to go into a Land which the Lord had promised him, what was it, but that he believed and trusted in the promises of God? He believed that his gracious Benefactor was able and would certainly give him the promised Blessings.

" Abraham

“ *Abraham believed in God, and it was accounted unto him for Righteousness; not because he believed there was a God, but because when God had promised him a Son in his old Age, he believed that he cou’d and wou’d give him the blessing which he had promised: and upon this account Righteousness was imputed to him.*

When *Moses* despised the honours and treasures of *Egypt*, what was it for? He did not despise them because it was a poor honour to govern a parcel of *Slaves*; no, but *he had respect unto the recompence of Reward.* He had his eye upon the promised *blessings*; and this, without any *earthly Assistance*, made him *for-sake Egypt not fearing the wrath of the King.* Through *faith*, therefore he endured as seeing him *who is invisible.* He saw the arm of *God*, by *faith* stretched out for his *deliverance*; and that, encouraged him to encounter the many *difficulties* and *objections* which he made when he received his *Commission.*

In short, when *Gideon*, and *Barak*, and the rest of the *Judges of Israel*; and *Saul*, and *David*, and the other *Kings of Israel*; I say, whenever they went forth against their *Enemies*, under a promise from *God* that he would *deliver them into their hands*, they trusted in the promises of *God*, and therefore were always *Victorious.*

From all these remarkable instances of *Faith*, it evidently appears that a *true Faith* consists in

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a firm

a firm *belief* of the *promises* of God, a sure *persuasion* and steady *confidence* that God *can*, and certainly *will* perform what he promises.

But this is not *all* that a *Christian* is bound to believe. A *Christian* must believe the *doctrines* of the Gospel relative to *Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our Faith*. And they are, that *Christ* is the *only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all Worlds*; came into the *World* to *save Sinners*; suffered *death* upon the *Cross*, so as to *die* no more; *ascended* (in the presence of many) into *Heaven*, and there sits at the right hand of God, where he now *reigns* and *interceeds* for his *faithful followers*, and will continue to *do* so to the end of the *World*: That he will come in *Glory* to *Judge* the *Quick* and the *Dead*, and will *reward* them according to their deeds here on *Earth*; will doom the *wicked* to *Hell*, where they shall, for ever, undergo the most inconceivable *Torments*; and will welcome the *Righteous* into *Heaven*, where they shall enjoy an uninterrupted duration of endless *Felicity* and *Glory*: And to sum up all, he must believe that the *Miracles* of *Christ*, and the *Doctrines* of the *Apostles* proceed from the power of the holy Spirit of God.

But the *blessings* annexed to *Faith*, do not proceed only from a *bare persuasion* of the *existence* of God, or the *incarnation* and *sufferings* of *Jesus Christ*; but from a firm and steady confidence that God *can*, and *will* surely perform

form what he promises. It was this that placed the *Apostles* on so many thrones to *Judge the twelve tribes of Israel*; they had in view those glorious *Rewards* promised by their *Lord and Master* to those who should *endure to the end*. This made them outbrave every *difficulty*, and suffer *persecution* with chearfulness and courage; they suffered hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, bonds, and even death itself; they were not only ready to be *bound* but to *die* for the Lord Jesus.

These Men, surely, were not so mad as to undergo all these Sufferings, for the *sake* of Suffering! They could not be so fool-hardy, as to encounter the united malice of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, only because they believed that *Jesus* was the *Messiah*, the Son of God! No, they trusted in his *Promises*, they believed him *powerful* to bestow on them *infinite rewards*, and faithful to *perform* his Promises.

From all which, it evidently appears, that it is not only believing the *doctrines* of the *Gospel*, and that *Christ* and his *Apostles* acted and wrote by the Power and Spirit of God, but it is also a firm belief that God *can* and *will*, most surely, perform his *Promises*: And *that* is the true faith, upon which the blessings of another Life are founded. I come now,

Secondly, To point out wherein this doctrine of Faith is misunderstood by the *Friends*, and by the *Enemies* of Christianity.

Those who think themselves *Friends* to the Gospel of Christ, (tho' in reality they are not) think that the *bare persuasion* that *Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the World*, and through *Faith* in his blood, they will receive remission of their *sins*, and enjoy every other *benefit* of his *Passion*: And on *this* belief only, they hope for *Salvation*,

But this is a very dangerous *mistake*, propagated by too many of those who would pass for the only *true Gospel* Preachers; and indeed, they *do* so by many ignorant and illiterate People, who give themselves up to a *blind Credulity*, and suffer themselves to be led away from the *established Church*, by every one who pretends to a more than ordinary share of the *holy Spirit*.

This mistaken notion of Faith, I say, is extremely *dangerous*, because it *deserves* the great end of the *Gospel*; which is to bring every *Sinner* to *Repentance*, and to make him *love God* with *sincerity*, and his *Neighbour* as *himself*.

And how can he *love God* with *sincerity*, if he lives in an habitual *violation* of his *Laws*? How can he *love* his *Neighbour* as *himself*, if he don't shew him all possible acts of *Kindness*? And yet this kind of Faith, which I am speaking of, will admit of his *neglect* of these things, and at the same time, he may rest assured of *Salvation*. A most fatal Mistake! that leads men to be remiss in the most *valuable* of Christian Duties!

And

And casts a *vile odium* upon our most holy Religion! If this is a *true faith*, let us revert the Disciples *Question* to our Saviour, and ask *who then can be Damned?* I protest I know not. For in this case, the *Hypocrite*, the *Libertine*, the *Cheat*, the *Murderer*, the *Sensualist*, and in a word, the *vilest Sinner* that we can think of, is at liberty to follow his vicious Inclinations *here*, and yet, by only believing that Christ *died* for his *Sins*, escape the *Curses of the Law*, and possess a state of *happiness* hereafter!

Now, my Brethren, what do you think of such a faith as this? Can there be any thing more grateful to *flesh* and *blood* than it is? Nothing can; it will suit *any* one; and we shall find *few* without it.

But then it may be objected, what does St. Paul mean, when he talks so much of being *justified by faith*, if it is not a belief in the *merits of Christ* for *Salvation*, without any *works* of our own? Though St. Paul tells us we are justified by *faith* only, yet it is not this *mistaken faith*; it is a *faith that works by Love*. A Man is justified by *Faith*, and faith is justified by *Works*. And this is verified not only by our own *reason*, but by the testimony of St. Peter. *What doth it profit my Brethren*, says he, *though a Man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say*

say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed, and be ye filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the Body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone: It is nothing more than a bare insignificant belief, and hath nothing to make it acceptable to God. Yea a man may say, says the Apostle, thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

So you see by these plain texts of Scripture, that by works it is, that faith is made perfect. And when St. Paul talks so much, in the 3d and 4th Chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, about being justified by faith, it was in opposition to the works of the Law of Moses.

Many of the Jews who were just converted to Christianity, though they believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, yet they thought it was still necessary to circumcise and keep the Ceremonial Law. Upon which St. Paul, to convince them of their mistake, tells them that by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified. And though St. James says expressly that a Man is justified by Works, and not by Faith only, yet he does not contradict St. Paul. He does not say a Man is justified by the works of the ceremonial Law, but by the works of Humanity and christian Love; and this, not thro' any merit in the Man, as though he deserved a reward for his good Actions; because it is well known

known that no man can perform a *perfect obedience* to God's *Law*, but it is by the *free Love* of God that we are *justified* through the *merits* of *Jesus Christ*; who hath already made satisfaction to the *divine Justice* for our breach of his *Commandments*.

It is clear then, that when St. *Paul* tells them they are *justified by faith*, it is not in *opposition* to such good works, as *prayer* to God, acts of *Charity* to our fellow *Creatures*, and a *sincere obedience* to the *precepts* of the *Gospel*.

No, it is by such a faith only as is *productive* of these good works; and yet we have nothing to *boast* of; because there is neither *merit* in our *faith*, nor our *works* in the sight of God; by which I mean, they cannot merit Heaven. But God has made our *faith* and *good works*, the condition of our *Salvation*, not for any merit in either, but only through the *merits* of *Jesus Christ*: The merit is all in him.

This, to every serious Mind, will appear to be a clear *explication* of the *doctrine* of *faith*. But how many do we *meet* with, who adhere to the most extravagant doctrines of their own *sect*; and without any examination, *receive* what should be searched into with the utmost care and circumspection.

But, my Brethren, shou'd we not, before we believe a *doctrine*, examine whether it be *possible* or *useful*? whether it be consistent with *reason* and correspondents to *truth*? whether it is
scriptural,

scriptural, and agreeable to *piety* and *Holiness*? surely we shou'd. For all those doctrines that won't stand the *test* of such an *examination*, we may be assured are the doctrines of *Men*, and not of *God*; and those who *propagate* them are, most justly to be looked upon, as actuated by pride, ignorance, corruption, and destitution of the truth.

A good and conscientious Man, is *startled* at a faith pregnant with *absurdities*; and the *Libertine* treats it (as it *deserves*) with *contempt* and *redicule*, and from thence concludes that the whole Christian Religion is a scheme of *error* and *delusion*. And as the *Libertine* is always ready to take every *Advantage* given him by weak Christians, against their *Religion*; here, he thinks, is a fine *opening* for him. He wou'd want no assistance to overturn such a doctrine of faith as this is, but imagines he can do it at *once*; having, as he supposes, a powerful *Battery* of his *own* always in readiness to play against it.

What is this *faith*, says he? It is no part of a *virtuous* Character; on the contrary, it is *folly* to believe a thing that is not evident to my *senses*; and when it is evident to my senses, I cannot withhold my *assent*. But as no man can see beyond his *Horizon*, so neither can he believe beyond his *Reason*.

This is too *vague* an argument to carry any *force* with it; for if faith depends upon *irrefutable*

visible Evidence only, why do the Scriptures all along promise so many *blessings* to it? Or, why are we said to be saved by *faith* , when, if we take it in this light, the greatest *Libertine* is not *without* it?

To this the *Libertine* may say, "I believe nothing of the *Scriptures* , therefore have nothing to do with *them* . I have no opinion of *Mysteries* , *Nature* and *Reason* shall be *my* guide; let *others* who chuse it, go by the *Ignis Fatuus* of Enthusiasm.

Well, we will argue with him from *Nature* and *Reason* . *Nature* instructs every one, who has the least degree of *Reflection* , that there is a *God* that *created* him; and has made him to know Good from Evil; and has also left him at liberty to *chuse* which he will: It must then, naturally follow, that this *God* will *reward* or *punish* him accordingly. Without this persuasion, there could be no *Religion* at all; and it must be the hopes of recommending themselves to the *favour* of this supreme Being, that influences the conduct of such as walk by the light of *Nature* .

And, pray now, what does *Revelation* require more, than to believe that *God* is the *rewarder* of *all* *them* that *diligently* *seek* *him* ? Does that which is an article of *Faith* , under the *light* of *nature* , *cease* to be so because it becomes a branch of *Revelation* ? Shall a Man *believe* those things which *nature* suggests, and *disbelieve*

them after they have been *confirmed* to him by the *Author* of nature? Monstrous Partiality! and Perverseness indeed!

Faith, says *St. Paul*, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. What were the things hoped for, before the publication of the Gospel? Were they not the rewards that God would give to the upright? What are the things not seen, under the Gospel Dispensation? Are they not the promised blessings of *Heaven*, thro' *Jesus Christ*? Where then is the *Mystery* that the *Libertine* has no opinion of?

In short, faith is the eye of *Reason*, which will direct such benighted mortals as walk by the light of *Nature*, to the Regions of *Bliss* and *Immortality*! It will influence their behaviour in *this* Life, and will support them under the uncertainty of things hoped for.

But what a comfort must it be to a good *Christian*, that his faith is established upon a much surer foundation, than it could possibly be under the light of nature! Then there was no certainty of such glorious rewards as we have now; they were only presumptive and hoped for, but now are ascertained by *Jesus Christ*, who hath brought *Life* and *Immortality* to light through the Gospel. It must therefore, be the lust of the *Flesh*, the lust of the *Eyes*, and the pride of *Life*, that war against the *Christian* Faith.

It

It does not *relish* with the *carnal* man to believe that *Jesus* is the *Son of God*; that he took man's *nature* upon him for our *Redemption*; that he proved his *divinity* by *miracles* and *wonders*; that he has made known the *will* and *purposes* of his *Father*, which is to reward the *Righteous* with *inconceivable Blessings*, and *punish* the *Wicked* with as *inconceivable Torments*; these are such mortal *stabs* to *sense* and *appetite*, which are the enemies of faith, that it is not at all *surprizing* to find so *little* of it amongst inconsiderate men. After arguing with the *Libertine* from *Nature*, let us see what *Reason* dictates.

If we consult ~~that~~, it will tell us, that such a faith as is founded upon *demonstration*, is not so *valuable* as that which is built upon *probable evidence* only. Because a Faith resulting from the conviction of our *senses*, command our assent without the least *hesitation* or *difficulty*. Whereas that which proceeds from *probable evidence*, has many *difficulties* to encounter, many *prejudices* to get over; which can be done only by serious *Reflection*, and impartial enquiry; and does, upon that account, require a more *generous* and *honest* disposition, than that which proceeds from sensible Conviction.

If we value the authority of *Scripture*, we may confirm this by what *Thomas* said concerning the *Resurrection* of *Christ*. *Except*, says he, *I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and*

put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. But when our Saviour condescended to remove his caprice and obstinacy, he, in an extacy of joy, cries out, My Lord, and my God !

You see he made no difficulty to *believe*, when he was convinced by the *evidence* of his *Senses*. But what said *Christ*? “*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed ; and in this rank of the blessed are all true believers at this day.*

Now, if there be any difference between a man that makes use of his *reason*, and diligently examines the *credibility* of things, and one who gives himself up to a hazardous and implicit Faith, without reason or consideration ; certainly the one, as he acts like a *rational Creature*, may be called a *virtuous Man*, and deservedly rewarded ; the other, as he gives up his *reason* and debases himself below the *brute Creation*, may be termed a *vicious Man*, and deservedly punished.

Give me leave, now, to draw an inference or two, by way of Conclusion.

And first, as this doctrine of faith is misunderstood, and represented in a false light by *Enemies*, and injudicious *Friends*, we should be upon our guard, and take care that we are not deceived, but consult the Scriptures *alone* for information.

But

But if, after all, we should happen to be misled by those who put *false glosses* upon this doctrine, we must be careful on the one hand, that it proceeds from a *defect* in our *understandings*, and not from an inclination to *this* or *that* opinion; so, on the other side, we must renounce all *Scepticism*, and where we find such evidence as would command our *assent* in a thing of *less* moment, than that of our *Salvation*, we shou'd pay the greatest *deference* and *respect* to it imaginable.

Indeed, when a Man has been bred up in an *erroneous opinion*, and through prejudice of Education, and inability to judge properly, steadily *adheres* to it, as being verily persuaded of its *truth*, he certainly deserves all the *Candour* and *Charity* that we are capable of *giving*.

When But when, ~~on the contrary~~, a man disregards *Religion* and *Virtue*, and lives an immoral and abandoned Life, when he thinks it a matter of no consequence whether he does any *good action* or not; of no consequence whether he keeps *holy the Sabbath*, or goes to any place of *public Worship*; but thinks a bare *leaning upon Christ* for *Salvation* will *save* him. Or when he imagines he has nothing more to do, but to come unto *Christ* just as he is; to carry nothing with him but his *sins*, in order that they may be washed away by the *blood of the Lamb*; I say, when this is the case, we must pronounce him
to

to be in a *dangerous* situation, or else allow that the Gospel *contradicts itself*.

The language of Scripture is, "*Repent and be Baptized for the remission of Sins*, which implies that we are not to come unto Christ by a bare *belief* in his *merits* only, but we must bring our *Repentance* along with us. And our *Repentance* must be *sincere* too, such as is proved by a reformation of *life* and *manners*. And, when we have done all, we must acknowledge ourselves *unprofitable servants*; that *we have done that which was our duty to do*, and not arrogate the least *merit* to ourselves; but allow all the *merit* to be in *Christ*.

Another inference is, that we take care to be of the number of those *faithful* whom *Christ* will take with him into *Glory*, when he comes to judge the *World*. For as we must all appear in the day of judgment, before a most awful *tribunal*, to answer for every *action*, and most *secret thought*; and as we know not how soon we shall be called off this earthly *Stage*, it must be of the greatest *importance* to us, to be prepared for the coming of our blessed *Master*, by a *true faith* productive of good *works*.

The faithful Christian, that "*staggers not at the promises of God through unbelief*, shall then meet with a most glorious reward from a righteous Judge, who hath promised him a *Crown of Life*?

But

But the wicked Sinner, who hath slighted the terms of *Salvation*, and neglected the *day of Grace*, shall be doomed to eternal misery.

Let the Sinner then, whoever he is, consider this, and be *wise* before it be too late ; let him lay aside his contempt of *God* and *Religion*, and be assured that what *St. Paul* says is true, "*The Just shall live by faith* : Purify therefore, your *hearts by faith* ; *Have faith in God*, and be persuaded, that what *God* hath *promised* he is faithful to *perform* ; and this will lead you to renounce the *World* and its *enjoyments* ; to *set your affections upon things above* ; to endure the seeming *hardships* of *Virtue*, for the unseen, though promised *joys* of *Heaven* ; and lead you at last, to the *end of your faith*, even the *salvation of your Souls*.



S E R M O N

But the wicked sinner, who has lighted
the lamps of his heart, and neglected the day of
Grace, shall be doomed to eternal misery.
For the sinner then, whoever he is, consider
this and be well advised, to be no later, let him
lay aside his compass of love and mercy, and
be assured that when the Lord has mercy, the
Lord will be true. For the sinner, your
heart is hard. Harder than steel, and he
perceives that when God shall be to
relieve his heart, and this will lead you to
repentance, to the world, and its temptations, to his
own affliction, even things worse, to endure the
torments of hell, for the sinner, for the sinner,
the Lord will be true, for the Lord will lead you
as he will, to the end of your days, to the end
of your days.





S E R M O N I I I .

I N W H I C H T H E

True Nature of REPENTANCE

I S

C O N S I D E R E D .



G

 2 Corinthians, vii. 9.

Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry. but that ye sorrow'd to Repentance.

IN order to find out the occasion of these words, we will look into the Context, where we shall find that St. *Paul* (in the foregoing Chapter) had wrote a very affectionate epistle to the *Corinthians*, wherein he informed them of the many sufferings he, and his *fellow-labourers* in the Gospel, underwent for the *truth* of what they had *preached*; and having exhorted them to *purity* of life, is informed by *Titus*, whom he meets at *Macedonia*, that it had so good an *effect* upon them, as to produce a *godly Sorrow* in their *Minds*, which led them to *Repentance*.

Their godly Sorrow led them to be more *watchful* and *circumspect* over their *lives* and *actions*; they *examined* themselves, were *sorry* for their evil doings, and their sorrow was *Godly*, which produced a *Reformation*.

And this will appear very plain to any one who reads this *Epistle*, from whence my text is taken. At the 11th verse are these words:

“ For

" For behold, this self same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

As if he had said, " It appears very evident, that your sorrow was of a *godly sort*, because it made you more *careful* of yourselves, in your *lives* and *actions*. You divested yourselves of every *evil* to which you had been before *addicted*; and, with indignation, *condemned* yourselves for your *past follies*. You dreaded the *vengeance* of *God*, which you knew you then justly *deserved*, therefore you earnestly desired to be *renewed in Christ*, and were passionately desirous of the *Glory of God*, and your *own welfare*. All these instances of a *sincere Repentance*, make it very clear that you are *truly* sorry for your Sins.

" Now I rejoyce, not that you were made sorry, but that ye sorrow'd to Repentance.

Having thus open'd my text, I proceed now, in the

First Place, To shew the *true nature* of Repentance.

Secondly, To remove some prevailing *mistakes* about it. And

Lastly, conclude with some proper Inferences.

First. I am to shew you the *true nature* of Repentance.

From the method I took to explain my text, it appears, that *true repentance* consists in a change of the *Heart* and *Mind* from an *evil disposition* to a *good* one. A *repenting Sinner* must return to God, under a strong conviction of *Guilt*, and the abominable *nature* of *Sin*; and the sense of his offending against an infinitely glorious and good Being, whom he is under the highest obligation to *obey*, should work so powerfully upon his *Mind*, as to make him sincerely *regret* his having done amiss; and not only so, but it must produce a reformation in his *life* and *conversation*; or else his sorrow is not *godly sorrow*, but *worldly sorrow*, which *worketh Death*.

Where there is no reformation in *life* and *manners*, there is no *Repentance*, because the mind is still the *same*; and when the mind continues the *same*, it is in a state of *impenitency*, which will bring the sinner, in the end, to everlasting destruction and misery.

Many of the *Jews* thought, that they, without more ado, should be entitled to Heaven and Happiness, because they were the *Children* of *Abraham*; and therefore had but a very *imperfect* notion of *Repentance*, 'till *John the Baptist* shewed them their *mistake*, and told them they must “*bring forth fruits meet for Repentance, and think not to say within themselves, they have Abraham to their Father.* Matt. iii. 8.

It

It was not merely their being of the *seed of Abraham* that entitled them to the blessings of the promised *Messiah*; no, but they were commanded to *purify* their *Hearts* by *true Repentance*; such as would evidently appear by the good fruits of a *virtuous* and *pious Life*, before they could expect a share in the *Blessings* which *Christ* would bestow upon his faithful Followers.

Many imagine that if they do but feel some *remorse* of Conscience, and have some transient Passions of *Grief* and *Sorrow* for their past sins, that that is *Repentance*; and never regard whether it has any influence upon their *future Conduct*, so as to work a *reformation* in their *Hearts*, and cause them to practice *Religion* and *Virtue*.

But in this they are greatly *mistaken*, for we shall find scarcely *one* Sinner without such a Repentance as this; not *one*, but who is often *convinced* of his *evil Courses*, by an accusing Conscience, which causes *remorse* and *sorrow*, through fear of the *vengeance* of God.

But what is a Sinner's *sorrow* and *tears*, if they do not produce a *reformation* in his life? they are but *feigned* and *hypocritical*. He is perhaps, sorry because he cannot enjoy his beloved Sins, with more *ease* and *satisfaction* to himself, but is determined to go on, and gratify his vicious inclinations, though they *do* now and then make him uneasy. So did *Herod*, when he swore to the Daughter of *Herodias*,
that

that he would give her whatsoever she would ask ; and upon her demanding the Head of John the Baptist, it is said, “ The King was exceeding sorry ; yet for his Oaths sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not deny her ; and immediately sent an executioner, and commanded his Head to be brought. Mark vi. 25, 26, 27.

Herod's sorrow was not *Repentance* ; for though he had a strong *conviction* in his Mind, that he was about to commit a very *benious Sin*, yet he *persisted*, and perpetrated an act of the vilest *Cruelty*, upon an innocent and just Man. So if the Sinner is sorry for his sins, and yet *continues* in them, he is no more a true Penitent, than if he went on in an uninterrupted course of Wickedness. Nay, on the contrary, when he goes on in Sin, in spite of the checks of his *Conscience*, it must be an aggravation of his guilt, and make him so much the greater Sinner in the sight of God ; for as much as he acts in direct opposition to the clearest *conviction* of his *Mind*.

A Man may *resolve* to leave his Sins, and lead a new life, and walk in the Commandments of God ; and yet this may not be *Repentance* : for meer *resolving* to do a thing is not *doing* it ; so a man's resolving to *Repent* is not *Repentance*. He must bring his good resolutions into *act*, or else he can have no certain evidence that his *Heart* is *altered* ; for this may be only a sudden Passion of his Mind, occasioned by some particular

cular circumstance that has awakened him from his lethargy, and leaves no lasting *impression* behind it; but quickly evaporates, and he returns to his old courses again.

A wicked man may, notwithstanding the utmost care and foresight, be brought into imminent *danger* of his *Life*, or be thrown upon a *bed of sickness*, which he apprehends to be his last; then his guilty *Conscience* flies in his face, his past *actions* are exposed to view, and he is terrified with the apprehension of his approaching hour, and dreads the thought of launching into *Eternity* loaded with *guilt*. Then it is, that the vain Mortal sees his Misery, and is struck with the utmost *horror* at the prospect of being brought to the bar of Heaven to answer for his actions. But when he is *delivered* from this danger, he forgets the solemn Protestations he made to God of *amendment*, and madly returns to his former wicked Courses. Can such a man as this be a *Penitent*? Can he be said to *Repent*? No, it is all *worldly Sorrow*, arising more from the apprehension of his *danger*, than from a resolution to act better. The fear of the *vengeance* of God, as the just *desert* of his Sins, makes him bewail his miscarriages, and promise a *Reformation*. But when he is recovered, where are his good resolutions? "*Like a morning cloud, and as the early dew they pass away.*"

Such sorrow as this is not *Repentance*, and if a Sinner dies under such circumstances, he must

must be eternally lost and undone! In short, *true repentance* consists in a deep and unfeigned sorrow for our *past sins*, and an entire *change of Heart*, productive of a *holy and virtuous life*. In order to which, the *proud heart* must be *hum-bled*; every *secret lust* mortified; every *evil thought* checked, and every *vicious habit* rooted out.

We must earnestly implore *pardon* and *forgiveness* through the *merits* of *Jesus Christ*, and appear before our *Judge* as *Sinners* that have forfeited our *lives*; bewail our *miscarriages*; promise *amendment*, and intreat *God's Grace* to *assist* us in our good resolutions; and then, when we bring *them* into *act*, we need not doubt but that we have rightly performed the duty of repentance. I shall now,

Secondly, Proceed to remove some prevailing mistakes about this important duty.

And First. Some imagine their Repentance is not *sincere*, unless it be accompanied with a great many *tears*, whenever they review their past actions, or when they are attending the public worship of God. But we very well know, that there are many who cannot shed a *tear*, though they are, at the same time, exceeding *sorrowful*: and many can *shed tears*, who have no sincere sorrow at all. We should always make allowances for constitutional *Heats*, or *Melancholly*.

Such

Such as are of a *melancholly cast*, whenever they examine their lives, are often overpower'd with *grief*, (especially when they have been guilty of *crying sins*) and this, when the *nerves* are *weak*, will vent itself in a flood of tears. But this very soon wears off, and so far is it from leaving any *true sorrow* behind, that it rather puffs them up with the conceit of being *really* converted; by this means, they are drawn off their *guard*, and imagine they have nothing more to do, but weep in this manner.

If we measure people's *repentance*, by the quantity of *tears* which they shed, we shall find very few *men* that are penitents.

It is not my intention, by any thing I have now said, to *depreciate* the value of *tears*; the virtue of which may cure the *disorders* of the *Soul*, as the troubled waters of *Bethesda* did those of the *Body*. But then they are *silent*, not *noisy* tears; they are such as are shed not in the *Church* only, but in the *Closet* also. When *St. Peter* wept, he went *out* to weep.

True repentance is seated in the inmost recesses of the *heart*, and is a calm and sober virtue; it does not stand in the *eye* only, ready to come forth at every *melting expression*, which works people up into *rapturous Heats*, and *extatic Affections*. It is not only *modest* and *silent*, but *sweet* and *natural*; and we may know it, not by this *mechanical whining*, but by the *reformation* it produces in our *lives*.

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When

When people indulge these passionate impulses, it throws them into a *dejection of Spirits*; then follows perpetual *scruples*, and fearful *anxieties*, which, if not carefully avoided, may lead to *despair*.

Again, many think they are not *truly Penitent*, unless they perform some outward acts of *Penance*; they are persuaded they must inflict upon themselves some *bodily punishment*, in order to *purify the Soul*. This is the doctrine of the *Church of Rome*. Indeed, the *Church of Scotland* and that of *England*, did formerly run into this error. They obliged the offenders to stand upon the *stool of Repentance*, or in a *white sheet*, in order to *shame* them into a better conduct. But this, so far from having the desired *effect*, rather proved the most effectual method of driving them into *greater enormities*; they had some *Modesty*, and could *blush* before they underwent that public penance, but *afterwards* had lost all *Modesty*, and had forgot to *blush* from that Day. And as *Modesty* and *Shamefacedness*, are the *guards* that *nature* has put upon our *actions*; when these are gone, we may bid farewell to *Religion* and *Virtue*.

God has kindly provided *Repentance* for our *comfort* and *happiness*, therefore he must be a very *weak* man, whoever he is, that will undergo a *voluntary misery* in the very thing from which he is to expect *relief* and *satisfaction*.

If the Sinner makes a sincere *confession* of his *Sins* to *God*, and *amends* his *life*, he will find *mercy*; and if he does not do *that*, he need not expect the favour of the *Almighty* by standing on the *stool of Repentance*, or any thing else he *can* do.

Another error, with respect to Repentance is, that some people think it never *effectual*, unless they have the *absolution* of the *Priest*. But this is a practice so entirely *Popish*, that there is not need of exposing it in a *Protestant Congregation*. I shall therefore, dismiss this particular, by observing only, that God has promised forgiveness to the Sinner upon *condition* of his *Repentance*. If he *repents*, he need not doubt of *forgiveness*, because what God hath *promised* he will surely *perform*. And if he does not Repent, no absolution of *Pope, Bishop, Priest*, or any one else, will *acquit* him in the sight of God.

But it may be said, absolution is not to be given to any, but such only as are *truly Penitent*. I ask then, how is the *Priest*, or any one, except *God*, to know when a Sinner is *truly Penitent*? And if it is not in his power to know *this*, it is not in his power to *absolve* him.

The last mistake that I shall mention, in the business of Repentance, is that of putting it off 'till *old Age*, or at all events, to the approach of *Death*. This is a very *dangerous* mistake, and many have been *encouraged* in it by considering the case of the *penitent Thief* upon the *Cross*.

They think, that let them have been ever so *wicked*, yet when they come to die, if they are sincerely *sorry* for their *sins*, they may obtain *mercy*, and go to *Heaven*. They depend wholly upon a *sudden conversion*, and a short *death-bed Repentance*; but this is surely, the most *pernicious doctrine* that can be thought of, because it destroys *Religion* and *Virtue*, and is a plain declaration that there is no necessity for a *good Life*. For if a man can be saved *without* it, by only repenting at the hour of *Death*, where is the *need* of it?

The *penitent Thief*, is the History of one who died as a *Malefactor*, and yet went to a state of *happiness*; so, I doubt not, many more who have died as *Malefactors*, have gone to a state of *happiness*, but if they had not *repented* before they came to *die*, it is much to be questioned, whether they would not have gone to the place appointed for the *Damn'd*, instead of entering into *Paradise*.

The Scripture does not mention whether the *penitent Thief* was a *bad* man for the most part of his *Life*; nor does it appear, but that he *repented* long *before* he was brought to *execution*. And allowing that he did not repent 'till the *very time* of his *Death*; how do we know but it may be such an extraordinary *favour* as will be granted to no *other* *Sinner*? It therefore, must be a very *groundless* thing, to apply *his* Case to a Man who has lived a *wicked* and *abandoned* life,

life, upon the presumption of *repenting* at the hour of Death.

This *Malefactor*, when he was upon the Cross, discovered a very amazing act of *faith*; he believed *Jesus* to be *the Son of God*, and able to *save* him: therefore begged of him to *remember him, when he came into his Kingdom*. His *faith* was even greater than that of *Christ's Disciples*, for *they* did not understand that *his Kingdom was not of this World, but all forsook him and fled*.

In short, we may look upon this Man's conversion as *miraculous* as that of *St. Paul's*. *Saint Paul preached Christ* after his conversion; so did this *distinguished Sufferer*, and sealed a noble confession with his *last breath*.

And can a wicked and careless Sinner, who has denied *Christ* all his life time, expect such a miraculous *Conversion* as this Man's? No, he has no reason to expect it, but rather must dread the *vengeance* of God for abusing his kind offers of *Mercy*, and neglecting the *Day of Grace*.

I shall now, lastly, conclude with some proper Inferences. And

First, Let us not *deceive* ourselves, and think, that after we have spent our youth in the service of the *Devil*, God will be content with the *lifeless service* of our *old age*; for this is to suppose he will accept of a mere *form* of repentance, instead of *real Reformation*.

The *Gospel* indeed, promises remission of Sins upon condition of *Repentance*. But would it
not

not be *madness* in any one, to presume from hence, to live in an immoral and abandoned Life, and repent just when he thinks fit? For how does he know, but even this night, God may say to him as he said to the *rich man* in the Gospel, "*Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.*" Can any man be assured this shall not be *his Case*? And if it shou'd what will become of his distant prospect of *Repentance*? How can he avoid being doom'd to the exquisite *tortures* of the *Damned*; since *Christ* has told us, that *except we repent, we shall all likewise Perish*?

But supposing that God shou'd give us both *time* and *warning* to *repent*, by afflicting us with a *lingering death-bed Sickness*; we will find enough to do to possess our Souls in a decent *patience*, without fretting, murmuring, or charging God foolishly. Therefore, however his *Conscience* may sting the Sinner with *remorse*, yet he will have no time to *reform* his *ill conduct* and put his *good resolutions* into *practice*: Without which, there can be no *sure evidence* that his *repentance* is *sincere*; and it is *sincerity* only that can make it *effectual*. The *divine mercy*, to be sure, is *inexhaustible*; and there is no knowing how available a *death-bed repentance* may be, as it is the *last shift* of a poor unthinking *Mortal*; but *this* we know, that such a state is extremely *dangerous* and *uncertain*.

Let us all then, my Brethren, look about us in *time*, and provide for this day of *Calamity*; as well

well knowing, that there is *no work, no device, no repentance in the Grave*, whither we are all hastening. And let not the men of *Spirit and Mettle* laugh at, and *despise* such a warning as this; for however, wanton and negligent, however bold and intrepid they may be, now in their day of *health and prosperity*; yet the time *will* come when the *scene* must *alter*, and the curtain of Death will be ready to fall; at which time, (in spite of their teeth) they will be obliged to think more *seriously*; and with too much reason perhaps, cry out, (in the language of Job) “*Oh that we were as in the Months past, as we were in the days of our youth!*”

But God grant that we may all be persuaded to a *speedy Repentance*, and by that means, prevent such an *unavailing Wish!* thro’ Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom &c. Amen.



well known, that there is no such thing as a free lunch. The Government is not a charitable institution. It is a body which has the duty of maintaining the law and order, and of providing for the common defence and safety of the people. It is not a body which is to be controlled by the passions and prejudices of the moment. It is a body which is to be guided by the principles of justice and equity, and by the interests of the community as a whole. It is a body which is to be held accountable to the people, and to the laws of the land. It is a body which is to be free from all undue influence and corruption. It is a body which is to be the servant of the people, and not the master of them. It is a body which is to be the guardian of the public interest, and not the champion of private interests. It is a body which is to be the embodiment of the public will, and not the instrument of private ambition. It is a body which is to be the source of justice and equity, and not the instrument of oppression and injustice. It is a body which is to be the foundation of the public order, and not the cause of its destruction. It is a body which is to be the pillar of the public safety, and not the threat to its security. It is a body which is to be the bulwark of the public peace, and not the source of its disturbance. It is a body which is to be the guardian of the public property, and not the instrument of its misappropriation. It is a body which is to be the defender of the public rights, and not the champion of their violation. It is a body which is to be the protector of the public interests, and not the cause of their neglect. It is a body which is to be the servant of the people, and not the master of them. It is a body which is to be the guardian of the public interest, and not the champion of private interests. It is a body which is to be the embodiment of the public will, and not the instrument of private ambition. It is a body which is to be the source of justice and equity, and not the instrument of oppression and injustice. It is a body which is to be the foundation of the public order, and not the cause of its destruction. It is a body which is to be the pillar of the public safety, and not the threat to its security. It is a body which is to be the bulwark of the public peace, and not the source of its disturbance. It is a body which is to be the guardian of the public property, and not the instrument of its misappropriation. It is a body which is to be the defender of the public rights, and not the champion of their violation. It is a body which is to be the protector of the public interests, and not the cause of their neglect. It is a body which is to be the servant of the people, and not the master of them.

S E R M O N I V.

S H E W I N G T H E
Importance of the QUESTION
P R O P O U N D E D B Y T H E
YOUNG MAN in the GOSPEL,
Concerning **ETERNAL LIFE.**

And for the advancement of the great end, he applies to the Son of God, who he knew came into the World to give men more ample knowledge of Religion and a more perfect knowledge of the Father. In the context, are several very remarkable things, which confirm the character of the person who made this enquiry, and do there-

Matthew xix. 16.

And behold, one came and said unto him, good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal Life.

IT is a sign of a wise and understanding Heart, and displays a very *hopeful* disposition, in one that asks a *discreet* and *pertinent Question*; especially if he makes choice of a person that is likely to *answer* it with *Truth* and *Propriety*. These qualifications we find are *centered* in the man in my text. He does not come with a design of shewing his *learning* and *abilities*, and to catch our *Saviour* in his words, as the *Pharisees* and *Herodians* did, but with a sincere desire of being instructed in the *will* of *God*, as being sensible that was the *only* way to guide him to *Life* and *Immortality*. And for the *accomplishment* of this great end, he applies to the *Son of God*, who he knew came into the World to give men a more *amiable Idea* of *Religion* and *Virtue*.

In the *context*, are several very remarkable things, which constitute the *Character* of the person who made this *enquiry*; and do therefore,

fore, render the Question propounded by him the more *interesting*. As 1st, in the 20th verse, he is said to be a *young Man*; and yet the warmth and vigour of *Youth*, together with the common presumption of having a long time to *live* in *this World*, did not *binder* him from thinking of the World to come. Secondly, in the 22d verse, he is represented as a *rich Man*, "*for he had great possessions*, yet the *Riches*, nor the *Cares*, and *Pleasures* of Life, did not make him forget the *one thing needful*. Thirdly, in the 18th Chapter of *St. Luke* and 18th verse, we find this person is called a *ruler*, by which we understand a man of *Rank* and *Figure*; yet notwithstanding this he sought the *Kingdom of God*. Lastly, in the 21st verse he is described to be a *Virtuous* and *Moral Man*; for he had *kept the Commandments from his youth up*, nevertheless, he desired to be further instructed in his *Duty*, that he might make *sure* of eternal Life.

Now, since the Question was propounded by one of so *eminent* a Character, I shall take occasion to consider

First, The importance of the Question, which is indeed, very great; and such as every *considerate* Man must have his mind *fixed* on.

Secondly, That being once satisfied, that there is such a state as a *Life hereafter*, he must be divested of his *Reason*, who does not earnestly desire to *obtain* it. And

Thirdly, Whoever desires to *possess* that blissful State, must do some *good* for it.

First then, I am to consider the importance of the Question, "*Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal Life.*"

This Question is of that importance, that every *serious Christian* must know that he is greatly *interested* in it; for it is certain that none of us can flatter ourselves of living *always* in *this* World. We are convinced of our *Mortality* by observing our *Neighbours*, both *young* and *old*, going daily to the *Grave*; and this shou'd lead us to look forward to *futurity*, and reflect within ourselves, what shall become of us *hereafter*.

So *weighty* a consideration as that of our *eternal preservation* and *welfare*, demands our utmost *prudence* and *caution*, and should sink *home* to our *Consciences*.

The *Question* is, whether we shall, after death, live for ever in another state, or be for ever buried in *oblivion*? Whether we shall be, as if we had never *existed*, and our thoughts *perish* like the *Beasts of the Field*, or whether we shall *survive* our Bodies, and exist in the boundless ages of *Eternity*? Or, above every *other* consideration, whether we shall, for our *good Actions*, be everlastingly rewarded with the most inconceivable *felicity*, or, for our *bad Actions*, be eternally doomed to such horrible and tremendous *Punishments*, that never entered into the heart of Man to conceive? These considerations concern every one of us so *deeply*, that whoever can withdraw

withdraw himself from seriously *Meditating* upon them, must do a prodigious *Violence* to his *Nature*, have entirely lost all the principles of his *Reason*, and efaced every sentiment of *Humanity*.

This Question is not only of the utmost Moment, with respect to a Life after *this*, but it is also of great influence upon our conduct whilst we live here on *Earth*. For, if we can persuade ourselves, that there is a supreme *Almighty Being*, and that our *Souls* are *immortal*, and that we shall be rewarded or punished according to our *actions*; we cannot, without the greatest *madness* and *stupidity*, venture the rage and vengeance of that *God*, who we must be sensible, knows the most secret *intentions* of our *Hearts*; and is acquainted with all our ways. And as our Life is so *uncertain*, and we know not how soon we shall be called to this place of eternity, how *vain* must it be to set our *affections* upon things in the *Earth*?

The *rich Man* in the *Gospel*, never thought of a future state; he filled his *Barns* with *provision* for many years; hugged himself with the thoughts of taking his *fill* of voluptuous *Pleasures*, and set his *Heart* upon his *beloved pelf*. But when he was surprized with the arrest of *Death*, what became of all his *fine schemes*? His hopes of *pleasure*, and all his *treasures* that he had *boarded* up? How must the *miserable Man* have dreaded his fatal doom, when *God* said

said unto him, "*Thou fool, this night shall thy Soul be required of thee!*" But when his poor Soul was beset with *Devils* and the *Ghosts* of the *Damn'd*, it was too late to bewail his Folly and Madness.

This is the case of every *worldly minded Man*; he imagines himself the only *wise* and *notable* person: prides himself in the conceit of his own *cunning* and *sagacity*, and looks upon others as *weak people*, misled by the *cheats* and *impostures* of *Priests*. But what is the reason of this? It is because he never examined into the merits of *Christianity*; but brought strong *Prejudices* against it, imbibed by means of *bad Company*, and *bad Books*; or else *condemn'd* it because he found it inconsistent with the *indulgence* of some *favourite Vice*, which he was determin'd not to *part with*. But if he acted *rationally*, he would attend to the *Evidence*, and not have suffered himself to be biased to Infidelity by his *carnal Inclinations*. If he wishes *Christianity* may be an *Imposition*, such a wish, like the *Jaundice* that gives a false Colour to every *Object*, will certainly hinder him from seeing any argument in its *favour*, in a proper Light.

But Religion will not be the *less* true, for his *wishing* it were not so. And it will be but a *poor* Comfort to a wicked Man, to find his *Mistake* in a state of Misery.

The most *shrewd* Man, with all his boasted *Reasoning*, can never *disprove* that there is a state
of

of *Happiness* or *Misery* hereafter. He can never make it appear, that he shall not be for ever *Happy*, or for ever *Miserable*, in another *Life*, according as he *demeans* himself in this. But in a matter of such infinite *moment* as that of *Eternity*, he shou'd act upon the *surest* side, where he ventures *least* if he shou'd happen to be mistaken. And which is the *surest* side? to *believe*, or *disbelieve* this great *Truth*? Surely to *believe* it, and to regulate his *Conduct* accordingly.

If he is one who never troubles himself to *look into* these points, nor thinks them worth his *Consideration*, but lives an *extempore* *Life*, and follows the impulse of every *Passion* that happens to *move* him, in this case he acts below the *conduct* of the *Brute Creation*. The *Beasts* of the *Field*, as far as *instinct* teaches them, are ever studious of their own *Preservation*; for when they are alarmed of any danger they carefully *avoid* it. But such a *Man* as *this* acts without any regard to his *own safety*, and as if he had no principle of *Rationality* in him.

But how *melancholly* must it be, to behold the *numbers* of *People* who profess their *belief* of this *religious Truth*, and yet *daily*, *hourly*, and *deliberately*, contradict their *Faith* by their *Practice*! To what an amazing *degeneracy* and *Corruption* do men run, who will think of *any* thing rather than *eternal Life*!

But

But a Man that has *some* expectations beyond the *Grave*, who is satisfied that there is a state of everlasting *Happiness* and *Misery*, must be guilty of the *greatest* act of Folly, if he will forego the *hopes* of *eternal Life*, for the sake of any *Vice* whatever.

What ! Tho' Virtue shou'd be attended with *hardships* and *difficulties*, a constant *War* with the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil* ; yet when he thinks of an endless *reward*, he will go on with *Patience* and *Courage* : Or else, he must have a very *mean* opinion of Heaven and Happiness, if he thinks them not worth the obedience of a *few Years*, tho' ever so difficult.

The hopes and expectation of future *rewards* will always be matter of *Confidence* and *Courage* to a good and virtuous Man ; and will support him under every *Misfortune* and *Suffering* in this *Life*, for that which *Christ* has promised to his faithful Followers, in the *World* to come. This the *discreet Person* in my Text, seemed to be very sensible of ; therefore, in the prime of his Youth, in the flower of his Age, and in the higher tide of *Prosperity*, he considered of it. It was not a *sick-bed* Meditation, for he was in *Health*. Not a melancholly qualm of *old Age* ; for he was *Young* : Nor the effects of being discontented and out of humour with the *World* ; for he was *Rich* and *Prosperous* : But it was the effect of *manly Sense* and *Wisdom* ; it was the eager desire of enjoying that *Happiness*,
and

and avoiding that *Misery*, which are to be the rewards of virtuous or bad Actions. Which leads me,

Secondly, To consider, that being once satisfied, that there is such a state as a *Life hereafter*, he must be divested of his *Reason*, who does not earnestly desire to *obtain* it.

This is so clear to every intelligent Person, that I need say but very *little* about it; because a Man must be supposed to *Hate* himself to the utmost degree, who can do *otherwise* than desire it. For can any one wish to be eternally *extinct*, or at least, to be everlastingly *Wretched* and *Miserable*? No Man can think of *either* of them without *Horror*; nor consequently, of *eternal Life* without a kind of *extacy* and *desire*. When the multitude, (which follow'd our Saviour only for the *Loaves*) began to *forsake* him, he turns to his *Disciples*, and saith to them, "*Will ye also go away? Lord, saith St. Peter, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal Life.*" - As if he had said, "If it were possible to be so destitute of *Grace* and *Gratitude*, as not to adhere to thee for thine own *Goodness* and *Excellency*; yet can we be so void of all *Sense* and *Self-Love*, as to forsake thee and *eternal Life* together?"

The *Patriarchs* of Old, the *Apostles* and *Evangelists*, and many others of the *Primitive Christians*, underwent the greatest *Dangers* and *Difficulties*, for that *recompence of Reward*, which

God has promised to such as are *faithful unto the end*. And what is that *recompence of Reward*? Is it not the blessings of Heaven, in an eternal future State? *Abraham looked for a City which hath foundations, whose Builder is God.* Heb. xi. 10. *David was persuaded that God would shew him the path of Life, and bring him to a place where there is fullness of Joy, and pleasures for evermore.* Psal. xvi. 11. And many took joyfully the *spoiling of their Goods*, knowing that they had in Heaven a *better, and enduring Substance.* Heb. x. 34. By all which it appears, that *eternal Life* is so infinitely desirable, that, as I said before, there needs but *little* to be said to *prove* it; and therefore, upon supposition of the *belief* of it, the only thing in *Question* is, what we must do for the *attainment* of it?

The *answer* to this *Question* was the *third* thing proposed, which is, that whoever desires to *possess* that blisful state, must do some *Good* for it.

And this is implied in the Text. "*Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal Life?*" And not only in the *Text*, but in numberless *other Passages of Scripture*; which are so much at hand to every one that it is *needless* for me to *mention* them. I shall therefore *observe* to you, that there needs no *Scripture* in the case, for as much as it is the natural Sense of every Man's *mind*, a principle in our

Corr-

Consciences engraven by the very hand of God, so that no *art* or *endeavours* can efface it. For what else is the reason that Men are *brave* and *comfortable* in their *Spirits*, when they have behaved themselves *well* and *virtuously*? That they are then erected with *Hope*, and kindly warmed in their *breasts* with *Peace* and *Joy*? That they can look up towards God with *delight*, and towards *Death* without *Consternation*? And, on the contrary, what is the cause, that when Men are *Conscious* to themselves, to have lived *wickedly*, and done *base* and *unworthy Actions*, that their *Spirits* are *down*, their very *Countenance* falls, and all things look *black* and *melancholly* about them? What, I say, can be the ground of this remarkable diversity in men's *secret Sense*, but the *force* and *efficacy* of that eternal *Truth* which God pronounced to *Cain*, and hath written upon every Man's Heart: *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? but if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the Door.* Gen. iv. 7. So that there can be no doubt of the *preposition* in general, that he that will hope to live for ever, and be *Happy* in another Life, must do good in *this*, which will tend to make us *Happy* and free us from *Misery*; for *Virtue* will bring some *benefit* to us, whilst *Vice* will croud us with all *Inconveniencies*.

If we hope to be *happy*, we must be devout in our *addresses* towards God; for nothing is more *reasonable*, than to make *him* our *Friend*,

who is able to make us *Happy* or *Miserable*; and the way to make him our Friend, is to observe all the *virtues* of a *good Life*. On the contrary, *Impiety* or a neglect of *Virtue*, is plainly against our *interest*; for this is to disoblige him, who is more able to make us *Miserable* than all the world besides, and without whose *favour*, nothing can make us *Happy*.

Our blessed Lord informs the *young Man* in my Text, that if he would enter into *Life*, he should keep the *Commandments*. As if he had said, "It is not enough that you observe any one Precept, but you must make Conscience of them *all*; you must not rest yourself satisfied with having done any one or more *single* acts of *Virtue*; that will not do to qualify you for eternal *Life*: It is an *uniform Goodness*, a *divine Temper*, and an *heavenly Conversation*, that must procure you that *Happiness*. This answer of our Lord's, overturns a corrupt Opinion which the *Jews* had amongst them. They thought that God set a greater *value* upon *some* of his *Laws*, than he did upon *others*; and that if any *Man* would come up to *them*, he might easily be *dispensed* with in *neglect* of the rest. But this the *young Man* seems to be aware of, and to have *escaped* this common error: For he replies, *All these have I kept from my Youth up: What lack I yet?* As if he had said, "I am
" very sensible that without *universal obedience*
" to the *Laws of God*, I cannot approve myself
" to

"to his divine Majesty; and therefore, I have
 "endeavoured through the whole course of my
 "Life, conscientiously to discharge my *whole*
 "duty so far as I *understood* it; but because I
 "wou'd not *fail* of that great Good which you
 "have *published* to the *World*, therefore my
 "further inquiry is, if there be not something
 "that may be done more *effectually*, to secure
 "me of my desires." To this our Saviour
 replies, *Why then, if thou wilt be perfect, sell all*
that thou hast and give to the Poor, and thou shalt
have treasure in Heaven. Not that our Lord
 intended this for a *standing rule*, or a necessary
condition of eternal Life: For we do not find
 that any where through the *whole Gospel* he
 hath so universally and indispensibly propound-
 ed it. But his meaning is, that those who *will*
 be Christians, must maintain a readiness and
 disposition to relieve the *distresses* of their *fellow*
Creatures, in opposition to *Covetousness*, or an
 anxious thirst after the *riches* of this World.
 However, this seemed an *hard* Condition to the
young Man, who we are told was *Rich*; there-
 fore *he went away sorrowful*; which plainly
 shews that *unregenerate* and *carnal* Men, are
 sadly concerned where they cannot have *Heaven*
 upon their *own*, or very *easy* Terms.

There is scarce any *one* duty, but what a Man
 wou'd undertake for *once*, if, without more ado,
 he might be *saved* by it. But it is not *one* ge-
 neros and good Action that will please God;
 but

but a constant course of *Obedience* to him, he having himself told us, that *to obey is better than sacrifice.*

The result then, of all is this; the plain and beaten way to Heaven, is to be habitually *good* and *holy*; and to make conscience all along of *every Commandment of God*; and this will not fail to bring us to our desired Journeys end: Therefore the wisest way to *secure* so great a Good, is generously to resolve to do all the *great things* we can, thereby to demonstrate both the greatness of our Minds, and the great *value* and *sense* we have of so inestimable an Happiness.

What remains then, but that in consideration of what has been said, we reflect upon ourselves, and examine what *Good* we have already done, and what lies in our *power* to do, that so we may enter into Life?

We cannot but be sensible, that our present Life wears away apace; *Death* is making daily approaches towards us, and the great concerns of *Eternity* draws on: Therefore, as the wise Man advises, *whatsoever good thing our hand finds to do, let us do it with all our Might.* This is the time of Probation for another World, now we stand *Candidates* for *Heaven*; and now, or never, we must secure ourselves of *eternal Life.*

I have already observed to you, that *eternal Life* is infinitely *desirable*, and am persuaded that every one *hopes* for it. But does a Sinner,
like

like *Naaman* the *Assyrian*, expect to be cured in *Rate*? To be saved easily and cheap? To be brought to *Heaven* whether he will or no? Does he understand what *eternal Life* is? And can any thing be too great for the attainment of it? What would not most Men give for a continuance of this *present* Life, which is little else but Care and Fear, Folly and Jealousy, Pain and Sickness, and at last, ends in Death? But to live for ever! this is a *pearl* of such a *Price*, that a wise *Merchant* would give all that he hath to buy it.

Shall a little Ease, a little Pleasure, a little Money, make us be content to be eternally Damned? Shall Heaven and everlasting Blessedness seem *Dear* to us at the price of these? Is it not better to deny ourselves a little Ease here, that we may rest for ever with *Abraham* and the *Patriarchs* in the Kingdom of God? Is it not better to forego a little momentary Pleasure at present, than to be eternally tormented hereafter? Were it not a wiser bargain to be somewhat *Poorer* in this World, so we may inherit a Kingdom in the World to come? Eternity is not far off; there is but the lease of one short Life between us and *Heaven*.

Let us then, as wise Men, look before us, and not be taken up with the sensible Objects of a vain World. Let us not think that a few cheap Prayers, or some slight Alms, or a formal Profession of Christianity, will purchase us
Hap-

Happiness hereafter. Let us, as *Christians*, imitate our *Master* in doing good *Actions*, great as our *Capacities*, and great as our *Hopes*. And as we hope our *Souls* will survive these mortal *Bodies*, let us not fail to do all the great and good things we can.

Let us lay up in store a good *Foundation* of good *Works* against the time to come, that so we may lay hold on eternal *Life*; and inherit those mansions of *Bliss*, which *Christ* has gone before to prepare for his faithful *Servants*.

Now to him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his *Glory* with exceeding *Joy*; to the only wise *God* our *Saviour*, be *Glory* and *Majesty*, *Dominion* and *Power*, both now and ever. *Amen*.



SERMON



S E R M O N V.

BY WHICH THE

Necessity of DIVINE GRACE,

IN ORDER TO

MAN'S OBEDIENCE,

Is clearly Demonstrated.



Pfalm lxxxi. 12.

*So I gave them up unto their own hearts. Lusts,
and they walked in their own Counsels.*

THE great God. is introduced in this *Pfalm* recounting to the *Children of Israel*, the many signal instances of *favour* and *mercy*, which he had vouchsafed them in the times of their *Calamity* and *Distress*. A copious Subject; fit for an infinitely gracious God to enter upon; which can be exhausted by infinity alone.

Thou calledst upon me, says he, in trouble, and I delivered thee in all thy necessities, and answered every Complaint. When you groaned under the cruel Oppression of the *Egyptian Task-Masters*, I eased your *Shoulders* from making the *Pots*. I went through the *Land of Egypt*, and destroying all their *first Born*, brought you forth with a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm.

Again, when you cried unto me in a new distress; when *Pharaoh*, with his *Chariots* and *Horsemen*, pursued and overtook you encamped at the red Sea: The *Egyptians* whom you saw that day with *fore amazement* and *fear*, ye saw
them

them again no more for ever ; but, in raptures of Joy sung : *The Lord hath triumphed gloriously, the Horse and his rider hath he thrown into the Sea.*

Once more, having escaped *this* danger, and got into a barren and dry *Wilderness*, where *Famine* and *Dearth* seemed to reign ; then I sent *Manna* from *Heaven* and fed you in abundance with the food of *Angels*. I also smote the *stony Rock* and the waters gushed out, and the *streams* flow'd withal ; feeding and sustaining you at the expence of a daily *Miracle*. Thus I plead my title to your Obedience. *Wherefore, hear O my People, and I will testify unto thee O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me ; there shall be no strange God in thee ; I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, open thy mouth wide and I will fill it. Enlarge thy desires, and I will satisfy the utmost measure of them.*

Cou'd it be imagined that these People could so soon forget this God who had done so great things for them, and loved them almost to a degree of fondness ? And yet, amazing to think on't ! we find him entering a heavy *Complaint* against them in the following words. *But my People wou'd not hear my voice, Israel wou'd none of me ; they turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them ; they made them a molten Calf, and worshipped it, and sacrificed thereunto, and said these be thy Gods O Israel*

which brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt. So being daily provoked and worn out by their Obstinacy and Ingratitude, I gave them up unto their own hearts Lusts, and they walked in their own Counsels.

Behold the just and extreme Judgment of God upon incorrigible Sinners, when he has tried all the methods of Doctrine and Discipline, Correction and Love, but in vain. Just is it therefore, with God to leave *those to themselves*, who have so ungratefully forsaken him; and dreadful is the Condition of those who are *so given up to their own Hearts Lusts, and suffered to walk in their own Counsels.*

I shall endeavour to engage your attention, whilst I pursue this subject in the following Manner.

First, I shall lay before you the necessity of God's *assisting Grace*, in order to Man's Obedience.

Secondly, That nevertheless this *Grace* is not always *effectual*.

Thirdly, The Justice of God in *withdrawing* the *slighted* offers of it.

Fourthly, The *wretched Condition* of those from whom it is withdrawn.

And then I shall conclude with a short application,

I am in the *first* place then, to lay before you the necessity of God's *assisting Grace*, in order to Man's Obedience,

All

All Men in all Ages have been sensible of the great proneness of human Nature to *Evil*; and the renowned *Philosophers* of the *Heathen World* who studied nature much, and understood it well, were at a loss for the reason of that *wrong bias* in Mankind; and cou'd not trace out the *pernicious Principle*, upon which to charge such a universal *Depravity*: Yet too well they knew, that so it was in *Fact*. Accordingly, we hear them loudly and passionately lamenting the fatal untractableness of the *Soul* to *Virtue*; the hanging of her *Wings*, and the drooping of her noblest Faculties.

We have many instances of the greatest Men *failing*, even in those *Virtues*, in the exercise of which they were remarkably distinguished.

Look into the *Book of Life*: There you will meet with *Abraham's* distrust in God; the peevish *Anger* of *Moses*; the *impatience* of *Job*; and to give you the most pregnant uncontrollable *example* of this sad truth, the stout and resolved *St. Peter* sunk into a *Coward*, and denied his Master. Who cou'd have entertained more *elevated* Thoughts of his own *Strength*, and after all more *shamefully* betray'd his own Weakness. If *Adam*, whom we are told, *God* made *upright*, and created him after his own *Image*, was no sooner left into the hands of his own *Counsel*, but fell from his original *Righteousness*; it can be no reflection to *affirm*, that Man, now *Impotent* and *Corrupt*, is incapable

pable of directing his own Way. For, O Lord God ! What is Man destitute of thy Assistance ? The load of natural Corruption lies heavy upon him and presses him down. With *Peter* he begins to *sink*, and must inevitably *Perish* without thy favourable Interposition. In his *best* estate, under the greatest order and regularity of his Faculties, he must take up that complaint of *St. Paul's*, and say, *I see a Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin.* So that to be left to our *own Strength* to perform an acceptable Obedience, is, in effect, the same as to be left under an utter *impossibility* of performing it : *But, our Sufficiency is of God.* To *him* we owe the first disposition and tendency towards *Good* ; not only the execution of the *hand*, but the *preparation of the Heart is from the Lord.* He stretches himself over our dead Souls, as the *Prophet* upon the *Widow's Son*, to recover Spiritual Warmth and Life in them. He gives *birth* to every *good Thought* ; encourages that *Thought* into *Act*, and rewards that *Act* with *Complacency*.

Cease then, ye Advocates for *Nature*, to deck and adorn her with the spoils of *Grace*.

How these *secret assistances* are convey'd to us, and the manner of their *operation*, we cannot perfectly comprehend. Neither can we explain how the dew of Heaven impregnates the *Earth* and makes it Fruitful. But as the drops
of

of rain come down from *Heaven* in their Season to water the furrows of the *Earth*, and cause the little *Vallies thereof to Laugh and Sing*, so may the dew of God's heavenly Blessing descend upon us; may it soften our *Hearts*, and prepare them for growth and improvement under its gracious Influences; and may our Obedience and Thankfulness *return up thither, as the smell of a Field which the Lord hath blessed.*

Indeed, the Communication of *God's Spirit* with the hidden Man of the Heart, is, in the ordinary methods of its *acting*, so gentle and imperceptible, that what is transacted there might seem to be the sole result of our *Reason* and *better Choice*; did not *Experience* as well as *Scripture* abundantly testify, *that in ourselves, is, in our Flesh dwelleth no good thing*: So that we are obliged in *Reason* and *Justice*, to write upon every good *Action* which we perform, that Confession of *St. Paul*: *Not I, but the Grace of God that is in me.*

But however weak and unequal we may prove in the Fight between the *Flesh* and the *Spirit*; yet we may be *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his Might, who spoiled Principalities and Powers, and made a shew of them openly*; leading them as so many pinion'd Captives, after the Chariot of his Cross.

But if the supernatural Assistances of *God's Grace* are so necessary to *Man's Obedience*, and withal so powerful in their Operation, it may
be

be asked, How comes it to pass that they are not always *effectual*? The *answer* to this Question was the *second* thing proposed.

That all things are alike to an Omnipotent Being; and that the *Spirit of God* can work so forceably, as to make all *Opposition* fall before it, must be granted. But we have no reason to infer from thence, that this Almighty Being acts to the utmost stretch and extent of his Power.

He was pleased once to Create *Man* at full *Stature*; is there any reason that he should *always* do so? He converted *St. Paul* in a most miraculous manner; has any Man a right to hope for the like Favour? *Frequent* instances of such *overpowering Grace* we must not expect to meet with. Because, to invert the *nature* of things, to break through the fundamental Laws of the *Creation*; tho' it may serve to demonstrate the *Power* of the Almighty, yet, with reverence be it spoken, it does not equally commend his Wisdom. But, manifold as the Works of God are, in *Wisdom* hath he made them all.

And since it was agreeable to his *Wisdom* that Man shou'd be furnished with a Principle to discern between *Good* and *Evil*, and a liberty of *acting* in pursuance of that Principle, unless God shou'd alter our *Nature*; pluck out the *essentials* of a Man, and make him *another Creature*; he cannot deal with us otherwise than

than as *voluntary Agents*, in a manner suitable to our *Faculties*; by *Persuasion*, not *Constraint*; by *exercising* our *Powers*, not *over-ruling* them; in such a way and by such methods as may *improve* human Nature, not *supersede* and *destroy* it. Therefore, tho' the *Grace of God* be *mighty*; it is not violent to *Compel*; tho' *strong*, it is not *Irresistable*: It demands a ready entertainment, and when we perform *our* part, the end is answered. For, as *Mary* was the Mother of *Christ*, so the *Christian Soul* must be the *Parent* of its divine Productions.

Whereas, if a Man will obstinately hold out against the *means of Grace*; *abuse* and *resist* the Holy Spirit, and refuse to be overcome, those *gracious Assistances*, may, in the event, prove *ineffectual*; not because *Grace* was wanting to us, but because *we* were wanting to *Grace*: As the *Sun*, in its meridian brightness, cannot make a Man *see*, if he will shut his Eyes and obstinately wink hard against it. I now proceed

Thirdly, To lay before you the *Justice* of God in withdrawing the slighted Offers of his Grace.

Simon, Simon, (saith our blessed Lord) *Behold Satan hath desired to have thee, but I have prayed for thee that thy Faith fail not*. The Devil is not more vigilant to work our *destruction*, than the *Spirit of God* is to defeat his Attempts. But when Men are obstinately attached to the *Enemy*, and betray the succours

of Grace; when neither the *Judgments of God* can learn them *Righteousness*, nor his *Goodness* lead them to *Repentance*: Then the controversy is decided. *Just* is it with God to give them up as unworthy of his future Care.

The doctrine of God's consigning Men over to a *Reprobate Mind*, in pursuance of an *absolute irrespective decree*, draws *consequences* after it too horrid to be mentioned; and turns his gracious dealings with Men into downright *Mockery*. Contrary to this pernicious Doctrine, how does the good God wait that he may be *Gracious*? Pay attendance upon us thro' the tedious stages of our Folly and Vanity; knocking at the door of our Hearts, and importuning for admittance? How does he become a suppliant to his *Creatures*, and court the work of his own hand? He that shed Tears at the Grave of *Lazarus*; Wept over the City of *Jerusalem*, saying, O *Jerusalem*, wilt thou not be made Clean, when shall it once be? In what affectionate and endearing Terms does he expostulate with them? *Why will ye die? As I Live, I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth; turn yourselves and Live!* How often would I have gathered you as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye wou'd not! Oh that there were such a Heart in them, that they would keep my *Commandments* always, that it might be well with them, and with their seed for ever.

Now,

Now, if all the methods of his Goodness cannot *reform* them; if all his loving kindness be repaid with Ingratitude and Contempt; and the offers of his *Grace* produce no other Effect than abuse and scorn; no wonder if God withdraw his *Mercy* from us, and shut up his loving kindness in displeasure.

We may expect, that like an abused Friend, he will ply us *no* more with unwelcome Importunities, but suffer the unkind design against ourselves to Prosper. And what *Injustice* can we charge this proceeding with, which amounts to no more than, after many unsuccessful and neglected offers of Kindness, to cease *contending* with *Wretches* who will not be persuaded to their own Advantage? Which leads me to the

Fourth and *last* proposal, which is to consider the *dreadful Condition* of those, from whom the Grace of God is withdrawn.

A Condition, such as might justify the liberty of the *Speaker*, shou'd he use those peremptory Words of *Elisba*, concerning *Benhadad King of Syria*, *The Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die*. For how can their case be other than *desperate*, whom the unerring *Physician* of our *Souls* hath given over unto *Death*? As Men who have no appetite to *do Good*; have lost all sense of their *duty*, and in whom the *Spiritual Pulse* is gone. They wou'd not accept of *God's Grace* to *prevent* their Sins; and

now they are *denied* that Grace to Repent of them. They have extinguished the light of Reason; blotted out the Law of their Nature, and effaced the notions of *Good* and *Evil*. And what principle, I pray, remains to curb and restrain the violence of their Lusts? What shou'd hinder, but that they go on with an uninterrupted sanguine Security, to *work all manner of Iniquity and Uncleanness with Greediness; treasuring up for themselves Wrath against the day of Wrath; which, when the measure of their Iniquity is filled up, shall come upon them to the uttermost.*

Sleep on now and take your Rest, are the words of the Son of Man to his *Disciples*, when the Hour was come that he shou'd be taken away from them. And if we are deaf to the repeated *Calls* of the *Holy Spirit*; if they cannot *rouse* us to *Watchfulness* and *Prayer*; the time will come when he shall be taken away from us: And then we shall be suffered to *Sleep on, and take our Rest*, 'till we awake either in this or another World, (not to escape) but to see our *eternal Destruction*. Then perhaps, we shall call upon God, but he will not hear, or if he vouchsafe us any answer, we must expect that sarcastical killing Reproach: *Ye have forsaken me, and served other Gods; go, cry unto the Gods whom ye have served.*

Thus I have gone through all the particulars at first proposed. Let me now, intreat a little more

more of your Patience, whilst I make a short Application of what has been said.

Now the foregoing discourse shou'd persuade us, (from a sense of our own weakness and insufficiency) to watch and pray incessantly for the *divine Assistance*: Plying earnestly at the throne of Grace, that it wou'd please the Almighty, who knoweth whereof we are made, to grant us the help of his Grace; to enlighten our understandings that we may *know*, and incline our *Wills* that we may *pursue* the things that belong to our Peace. Of the success of these addresses we cannot *doubt*; being warranted by our Lord himself, thus to argue. *If ye, being Evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* But then, we must meet all his *Assistances* with a ready *Compliance*, welcome every *suggestion* of this *blessed Monitor*; lest he withdraw the slighted offers of his Mercy, and make no further *Attempts* upon Men, too hard to be softened, too desperate to be reclaimed.

Justice we know, is as much a perfection of the divine Nature as *Mercy*, because both are Infinite. 'Tis *our* privilege, and cost *him* dear who purchased it for us, that from *offended Justice*, we may appeal to *Mercy*; but *Mercy despised* and *outraged*, whither shall we *turn*, or where shall we seek for *refuge*? If *Grace* and *Salvation* itself be *abused*, and turned into wantonness,

tonness, who, or what shall save us from the wrath to come?

Who knows how far the measure of his *Iniquity* is from being filled up? Who can ascertain the time when the diffinitive irreverfible doom shall pafs upon him? Who knows, but being advanced thus towards the regions of *Death*, the next ftep may fink us to fuch a Depth from whence there is no return.

To conclude; fince there is no Judgment, fhort of *Hell*, like that of being *given up to our own Hearts Lufts, and fuffered to walk after our own Councils*; let us pray, in the words of our Liturgy, that God would “deliver us from “hardnefs of Heart and contempt of his Word and Commandments; that he would be pleafed to work in us both to *Will* and to *do* of his good Pleafure, that fo we may work out our *Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, and receive the *reward* of that *Grace* which was not beftowed upon us in vain, in the realms of everlafting Glory.



S E R M O N



S E R M O N VI.
IN WHICH IS SET FORTH
THE VARIOUS
D E L U S I O N S
O F
S I N.



Galatians vi. 7.

Be not deceived; God is not Mocked; for whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap.

THE great Apostle *St. Paul*, in this Text, has laid down the general and fundamental Doctrine of the *Christian Religion*; which is, that every Man shall finally be rewarded according to his *Actions* in this Life.

This is a Maxim so agreeable to the *natural Reason* of Mankind, that it is universally made the Foundation of all *Laws*; it is the maintenance and support of *Government*, and the Pillar and Ground-work of all *Religion*. This Doctrine, that every *Creature* shall at the last awful Day of Judgment, be rewarded by the unerring and impartial Judgment of the great *Creator*; this, I say, is undeniably proved by all the principles of *Reason*, and expressly confirmed, not only by numberless Passages in the *old Testament*, but we are frequently assured of it by our divine Legislator in the *New*. Yet so numerous, so various are the delusions of Sin; and such a mist of Darkness do the sensual desires of mankind, cast before their own Eyes, that

that the *Apostle* thought it absolutely necessary to give his too easily deluded Brethren this caution in my Text, and frequently to repeat it, in other places, upon the like Occasion. *Be not deceived*, says he, *neither Fornicators, nor Idolators, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven*, and then assures *them*, and *us*, that *because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience*; even upon the *Heathens*, if they live in their debauched Practices, contrary to the light of *Nature*, and to the eternal Laws of *Truth* and *Reason*.

That prudent and considerate Man, who takes a *survey* of the World about him, cannot but be astonished and grieved at the *Madness* and *Folly* of the generality of his fellow *Creatures*, who act, for the most part, like *rational Beings*, except in that important concern of a *Life* after *this*; which, (with shame and grief be it spoken) is seldom *thought* of 'till they are ready to *launch* into it.

And whence can this proceed from? Why, from the many *deceitful Objects* that they meet with in this *Theatre of Vanity*; which draws them from their *Duty*, and prevents them from observing this great foundation of Religion, that every Man shall finally receive of God ac-

N

cording

cording to what he has done, *whether it be Good or whether it be Evil.*

What the principle of these *Delusions* are, I shall make it the business of this discourse to Enquire.

The *First* then, that most obviously offers itself in the survey of Mankind, is that general *Carelessness* and *Inattention*, which most Men do unfortunately labour under. Instead of considering the design of their Creation, we find them in the pursuit of *Ambition* and *Covetousness*.

The *ambitious Man*, spends his Days in the quest of *Fame*, and in aspiring to Posts of *Honour*; and in this he places his chief Happiness. But could he be persuaded to suffer his *Reason* to throw off the *Mask*, which his *Fancy* has put upon these things, he would then discover nothing but *Emptiness* and *Vanity*. He would then perceive, that there is no *Glory* like that of a *generous* and *honest Mind*; no *applause* like that of a Man's *Conscience*, when it displays itself in good and virtuous Actions. And who would quit the inward *Joy* and *Content* of his *Soul*, for the perishing *Baubles* of this transitory World? This would be to leave a lasting Happiness to follow a *Phantom* or *Dream*.

But, notwithstanding all this, what difficulties do Men chuse to undergo, only to be loaded with heavier Sorrows, to be amazed with greater Fears, and to bring upon themselves greater Trouble and Perplexity. In like Manner,

Her, the *Covetous Man*, whose Mind is continually bent upon accumulating *Wealth*, and making a *Fortune*, who is continually filling his *Bags* with *Gold*, and hoarding up his *Money*, only brings upon himself so much the more *Vexation* and *Anxiety*. For between the Care of *keeping*, and the fear of *losing* this Idol of his Heart, he is deprived of the *enjoyment* of that, which perhaps, he has been *sweating* and *toiling* for, the greatest part of his Life. So Idle and so Fruitless is all the Industry of Ambition and Covetousness !

Behold the *unthinking Man*, who breaks his *sleeps* and racks his *Brains*, and employs his Skill to no purpose ; but to be more *unhappy* and *uneasy* than he was before. He labours continually to gratify his *Passions* and *Appetites*, and is so far from paying that *Homage* which is *due* from a *despicable Worm* to an *all-glorious Creator*, that his Life is one continued series of *Rebellion*. He never allows himself time to consider, that the *great God* is a constant Spectator of all his *Actions*. He little thinks that he is acquainted with all his ways ; that he has beset him behind and before ; that he is present in our *Hearts*, and beholds all the Impurity that is acted in our Thoughts and Desires.

The supreme Being is conscious to the *Fraud* of the *unjust Deceiver* ; there is not a *proud Thought* or *secret Lust* in our *Hearts*, but he views with the utmost *Indignation*.

Not all the *Idle Pretences*, nor *pitiful Excuses*, nor pleas of *Necessity*, will avail that Man (in the day of Judgment) who has habitually neglected the *service of God*, and *apostatized* from the Faith. For however he may titfle his *Conscience* and Impose upon the *World*, yet the great King of Heaven cannot be *deceived*. He can discern the Heart of an *hypocritical Pharisee* under all his *broad Philactory*, and knows from what *Fountain* his Actions proceed. There is no *trimming* with the World without *his* knowledge; nor can the most *sly* and *subtle Sinner* act any thing so *secret* as to escape the *all-seeing Eye* of that *God*, who is too *pure* to behold *Iniquity* without punishing the Offender. With what awful Reverence then, ought we to think of this *all-powerful* and *all-seeing God*! When we consider that there is a Day of *Retribution* hourly approaching us, when we shall all be called to an *account*, and the most minute Circumstances shall be evidently disclosed. But, alas! How little do Men make of that Day? and how greatly do they slight that Judgment?

In this World, there appears to be no difference between the *Just* and the *Unjust*, but that it fares much alike with *him that sacrifices*, and *with him that sacrifices not*; this draws Men, inconsiderately, into the *Paths of Vice*, as if things would never have an *end*, but should always continue as they now are; and so they go on, adding one Days *Crime* to another, 'till they

they are surprized with the arrest of *Death*; at which time, they would give, if it were possible, a *thousand Worlds* but for *Hezekiah's* lease of *Life*, to provide for that dreadful Day hereafter.

How *Vain* is *Man*! Every *Man*, says holy *David*, at his best *Estate* is altogether *Vanity*. His *Soul* is deceived and ensnared by the suggestions of his *Senses*, which represent the visible Objects of this *Life* so pleasing to his carnal Appetites, that things of a *spiritual* Nature, are to him as mere matters of *Fancy* and *Conceit*. And when the *World* has got possession of his *Heart*, it has all the Powers and Faculties of his *Mind* at command, and he is captivated and made a *slave* to ungovernable *Passions*; the consequence of which, is a coolness for *spiritual Improvement*, a disrelish for *religious Duties*, and a very dangerous State of his *soul*.

Indeed, it is very observable that those *Temptations* in the *World*, which appear very *Innocent* and *Natural*, are very often of fatal Consequence. For instance, it is very *natural*, and very *reasonable*, that a *Man* should endeavour to make a Provision suitable to his *station*, and the state of his *Family*. Our *Reason* and *Conscience* dictate, that we should be *diligent in our Callings*, in order to the support and comfort of *Life*. But then if our *Minds* are continually intent upon these things, without any regard to the one thing *Needful*; if we place our *Affections* upon

upon them, and are continually *anxious* about them, they will be *dangerous* Temptations. For when we covet the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of this World, they exclude the *Love of God* from our *Hearts*, which leads us into *sin*, which produces *Misery*, and the end is *eternal Destruction*.

Secondly, The next thing by which Mankind are so easily *deceived* is, that they imagine God is very easy to be *pacified*, and is pleased with every little *appearance* of Virtue, without regarding Men according to the whole tenour of a *virtuous* or *vicious* Life. And hence, though they indulge themselves in the habit of any plain *Vice*, tho' they live in a state of *Adultry*, *Fornication*, *Intemperance*, *Fraud*, or any other unrighteous Act; yet they hope to appease God with some *external Forms of Worship*; they think that their attendance at some place of *public Worship*, will screen their *Villainies* in *this* Life, and sufficiently *atone* for them in the *next*. Poor deluded Sinners! thus idly to *Impose* upon themselves, and presumptuously to affront the *Majesty of Heaven*!

Let them but consult the Scriptures, and they will find, that no ceremonious Methods of Attonement will satisfy an offended God. This the Prophet very strongly declares in these words; *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the Burnt-Offerings of Rams, and the fat of*
fed

fed Beasts; and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my Courts? Bring no more vain Oblations; Incense is an Abomination unto me; the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Assemblies, I cannot away with; it is Iniquity, even the solemn Meeting. Your new Moons, and appointed Feasts, my Soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your Hands, I will hide mine Eyes from you; yea, when ye make long Prayers, I will not hear: Your hands are full of Blood. Wash ye, make you Clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine Eyes. Cease to do Evil; learn to do Well; seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow.

Finally, Let not the Sinner deceive himself. God is not to be Mocked. If he goes on in an habitual course of Debauchery, and thinks that God will accept of a few empty Ceremonies, he will find himself sadly mistaken at the last. His hope will be the hope of the Hypocrite, which is as the Spiders Web. Rather let him remember that his future harvest will be answerable to the actions of this Life; and that as he hath sown, so he must expect to reap; ie, he that soweth to the Flesh, he that gratifieth his sensual desires shall reap Corruption; decaying Pleasures here, and eternal Perdition hereafter, must be his Portion.

Portion. But he that soweth to the *Spirit*, he that makes a Conscience of his *Duty*, that adheres, as near as human frailty will admit, to the eternal Laws of *Truth* and *Reason*; he, we are told, shall of the Spirit, reap *everlasting Life*, the Spirit of him that raised up *Jesus* from the Dead, shall raise up *him* also; and, at the final Day of *Retribution*, shall reward his *Fidelity* in *this* Life, with a Crown of eternal Glory in the *next*.

Thirdly, Another Delusion by which wicked Men impose upon themselves, is that of their going on in a vicious Course of Life, upon the general notion of the *Mercy*, *Patience*, and *Goodness* of the Almighty; never considering whether they themselves are proper and capable Objects of his Mercy and Compassion.

And these deceive themselves, by fixing their Attention wholly upon one *single* Attribute of the Almighty; and consider not the great God, as endow'd with all those *Perfections together*, which compleat the Character of an all-wise, and righteous Governor of the Universe.

They consider not, that as *Power*, tho' *Infinite*, is still confin'd to what is the *Object* of Power, and does, by no means, extend to *Contradictions*; so *Mercy*, however *Infinite*, is always limited to things which naturally are the *Objects* of Mercy. Wherefore, tho' God is indeed, *long-suffering*, and of great *Patience*, and grants all Mankind both *space* and *time* of
Repentance,

Repentance, (for he created none to Perish, but would have all embrace the terms of Salvation) I say, tho' God is thus *forbearing*, yet *Sin* is an *Abomination* to him; his long-suffering when *abused*, will have an *End*, and with greater Severity he will execute his *Vengeance* upon the impenitent Sinner.

God has declared, that his *Spirit shall not always strive with Man*. Let not the Sinner then *despise the Riches of his Goodness*, and *forbearance*, and *long-suffering*, as if he did not know that the *Goodness of God leadeth him to Repentance*: But, after the *hardness and impenitency of his Heart*, *treasureth up to himself Wrath against the day of Wrath*, and *revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*; who will render to every Man according to his *deeds*: To them, who by *patient continuance in well-doing*, seek for *Glory*, and *Honour*, and *Immortality*, *eternal Life*: But unto them that are *Contentious*, and do not obey the *Truth*, but obey *unrighteousness*; *Indignation and Wrath*; *Tribulation and Anguish*, upon every Soul of Man that doth evil. The final Punishment of Sin, is not at all the less *Certain* by being *remote* and at a *Distance*; seeing that *one Day is with God*, as a *thousand Years*, and a *thousand Years as one Day*. As *St. Peter* observes, *The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust to the day of Judgment, to be Punished*.

Great therefore, is the Deceit, and fatal the Error, by which all those deceive themselves, who continue in their *Sins*, because God's Mercy, Goodness, and Compassion knows no bounds.

Fourthly, Another delusion is, when Men value themselves upon their being of a particular *Sect*, without any regard to the *goodness* of their Lives and Actions.

But let me tell those much deceived People, that no *particular Profession* will *save* its Members; for with what *delusions* soever, and in whatsoever *forms* Men impose upon themselves, still the *Apostles* assertion will for ever remain true: *He only that doth Righteousness is Righteous, and whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

The *Jews* valued themselves greatly in being the *peculiar People of God*, and despised all such as were not of their own Nation; and the *Pharisees*, in particular, look'd with the utmost Contempt upon those whom they called *Publicans and Sinners*, and were ready to say, *Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou.* And yet we find that our *Saviour* regarded them not one jot the more upon this account; but often branded them as *Hypocrites, a Generation of Vipers, an Evil and Adulterous Generation.* And the Instance of the *Pharisee and Publican* that went into the *Temple to Pray*, is sufficient to convince us that *God is no respecter of Persons;*
for

for there we find, that the *Publican* was justified rather than the *Pharisee*, notwithstanding that he *valued* himself so much upon his profession.

In a word, it is (thro' the merits of Christ) a Man's *Integrity*, and not his being of any particular *Sect*, that must gain him *Acceptance* with God; for, as *St. Peter* saith, *In every Nation, (and consequently in every Denomination) he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him.*

Fifthly, The last Delusion that I shall mention, and which is, above all, the most pernicious and extensive, is the imaginary design of future Repentance.

The great Doctrine of the Gospel is this, that whosoever sincerely and effectually Repents, shall, through the Redemption and Intercession of Christ Jesus, obtain remission of his past Sins, and be rewarded with eternal Happiness. But shall a Sinner imagine, that he may, from hence, indulge himself in a debauched and unrighteous way of Life, and repent just when he thinks fit? Can he flatter himself that an all-powerful and righteous God, will be content with the cold Services of his old Age, when the Devil has had the Services of his Youth? Is an earthly King to be persuaded to turn his Court into an Hospital, and to be attended by Cripples? Even to imagine him capable of being prevailed upon to do such a thing, either by Flattery or Persuasion,

suasion, would be an affront to his understanding? And shall we think that to be *right in Man*, which is not so in the *Almighty*?

Such a Repentance as this, is turning the *Grace of God* into *Wantonness*, or making *Christ* the Minister of *Sin*; or, according to the words in my *Text*, *deceiving ourselves by attempting to mock God*. For the Repentance spoken of in the *Gospel*, is not the *Passion*, but the *Virtue* of Repentance; it is a real change of Mind; such a sincere amendment of *Life* and *Manners* as is, in the *Scripture*, very suitably and significantly stiled the *new Man*.

And now, either there *is* a day of retribution, or there is *not*? If there is *not*, why then, what are we doing? Why any regard to *truth* and *honesty*, any further than to keep out of the reach of *human Laws*? Why do we not make our way pleasant and easy through *Life*, though we do it to the *injury* and *disadvantage* of our *Neighbours*. Not to do so, when there is no *account* to be given either *here* or *hereafter*, is to confess ourselves narrow spirited and cowardly Animals.

But if there *is* such an account, if there be any such thing as the *comforts of Abraham's Bosom*; surely, we shou'd endeavour to *obtain* them. We should not *postpone* our Repentance, as we *know neither the Day nor the Hour of our Master's coming*; but should embrace that gracious Invitation of our Lord: *Come unto me, all ye*

ye that Labour, and are heavy Laden, and I will give you Rest. So reviving should it be to a poor Sinner, so comfortable to consider, that his offended God is, upon his sincere Repentance, both willing and ready to forgive him.

We should consider the *uncertainty* of our length of Days, and that our future *harvest* will be answerable to what we have sown in *this* Life; that it is *now* we must secure ourselves of that welcome Sentence from the King of Glory: *Well done thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* Oh joyful Words! Oh welcome Sentence! How greatly shou'd we study to obtain it? How much shou'd we *despise* the vain Pomp and Vanity of *this* Life, if we hope to be happy in the *next*? How studious should we be to keep that tremendous Day of account in our View? And since we shall be rewarded according to our deeds, *what manner of Persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness.*

But if the eternal weight of *Glory* that awaits our good *Actions*, is not sufficient to excite us to forsake our *darling Sins*, and, like lost Sheep, to return to our great *Shepherd*, perhaps the dread of an eternity of *Pain*, may have some influence upon us.

Let us attend a little, and hear the *Sentence*, which *Christ* himself tells us, he will pronounce upon the *Wicked* at the final day of Judgment: *Depart from me, ye Cursed into everlasting Fire,*
prepared

prepared for the Devil and his Angels, I say, let us attend to these Words; perhaps there may be more in them than we are aware of. Depart from me ye Cursed. Where? Not to your former habitations which ye possessed on Earth: not to fine Houses, plenteous Tables, great Offices and Dignities; not to wear your Purple, and fare sumptuously every Day: No, but to a gloomy Prison of exquisite Torments, from whence you shall never be released. Go to the Place prepared for apostate Spirits, dwell with them in Misery, whom you chose to imitate in Sin and Rebellion against your Creator and Lord; dwell with them that hate you, that have sought your Ruin, and now will triumph over you in it; and be as Miserable as the mutual Hatreds and Contentions, the Scorn and Insults of Enemies can make you. And what is still worse, dwell in all this Misery and Vexation for ever!

Thus is the *Horror* and *Woe* of this Sentence fortified on every part; and thus must every *wicked* Man expect to be treated in another Life.

May such thoughts as these work in us such a *Change*, as may lay the Foundation of the hopes of a welcome reception from the Lord of Life.

I shall conclude with that merciful Warning, which *Christ* our Judge has left us upon Record. *Take heed, says he, therefore to yourselves, lest at any time your Hearts be over-*
charged

charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and the Cares of this Life, and so that day come upon us unawares. For as a Snare shall it come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole Earth; watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted Worthby to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.



SERMON



S E R M O N VII.

THE
GREAT IMPORTANCE OF
Private and Family PRAYER,
IN ORDER TO A
RELIGIOUS LIFE.



Joshua xxiv. 15.

*But as for me and my House, we will serve the
L O R D.*

FROM these words I shall take occasion to discourse to you, of the *necessity* and great importance of *Private and Family Prayer*. And, in order to this, I shall,

First, Shew, that it is the indispensable Duty of every one to retire into his *Closet*, and *Pray* to his heavenly Father in secret.

Secondly, That it is the Duty of every Governor of a *Family*, to call every one of his *Household* together, and offer up their *joint Prayers* to God for his Blessing and Protection.

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to answer the *Objections* to this Duty.

And, Lastly, Conclude with a suitable Application.

First, I am to shew that it is the indispensable Duty of every one to retire into his *Closet*, and *pray* to his heavenly Father in secret.

And this is very evident from the *nature* of the thing itself. For *private Worship* is a surer Testimony of our *Belief* in God's *Omni-science*,

science, than *public* Devotions *can* be; because it is not to be supposed that a Man would shut himself in a *Closet* and *Pray*, unless he had a firm Belief that he was addressing himself to a *Being* of *infinite Knowledge*; a *Being* who knows the *secrets* of his *Heart*, knows his *Wants* and *Infirmities*, and is *all-powerful* to grant his *requests* whenever he sees it *Fitting*.

But in *public* Prayer it may be otherwise. A Man's *Heart* is so treacherous, that he often deceives *himself* as well as the *World*, and makes himself believe that he is acting upon a *religious* Motive, while he is influenced by views of *Interest*, or a principle of *Vain-Glory*: Like the *Pharisees* of old, he prays in *Public* that he may be *seen* of *Men*, out of Custom, Decency, or some worldly Motive.

But in *private* Prayer a person cannot be *deceived*, because praying in *secret* is founded upon the belief of God's *Omniscience*, and the constant Exercise of it must naturally keep up in our Minds a due Sense of being under the *all-seeing Eye* of God, which will be a means to restrain us from committing even the most *secret* Sin: And it is our *secret* Sins that we are in the greatest danger of.

Besides, in *Private*, we have an opportunity to be more *particular* in our Prayers, than it is *possible* to be in *Public*. We have, all of us, some *particular* sins to confess; some *particular* *Temptations* to pray against; some *particular*

Wants to be satisfied, and some *particular Blessings* to give thanks for. Now, we cannot make these particular Circumstances, peculiar to *each* of us, the subject of our *public Devotions*: Therefore we must retire into our *Closets*, and *pray to our heavenly Father in secret*.

If we attend the *publick Devotions* of our *Families*, or at the *Church*, ever so *constantly*, still there is a necessity for daily *private Devotions*; that we may confess our *secret sins*, give thanks to God for our *particular Blessings*, and pray particularly for his divine *Grace* to protect us from those *Temptations* to which we are most liable.

When we are thus particular in confessing our *secret sins*, and in acknowledging the *Mer-cies* and *Blessings* of our Creator, it must have a much stronger Effect upon our Minds, than if we only did all this, in a *public and general Manner*.

Among the many excellent Instructions given by our *Saviour* to his *Disciples*, is this; *When thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut the Door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly*. And this he practised himself; he chose a *Mountain*, a *Desert*, or a *Garden* for this purpose; and, that he might be more *private*, he prayed at *Night*; when he was unobserved by any human Eye. *A great while before it was Day, he went out and departed into*

into a solitary Place, and there Prayed. At another time, he continued all Night in Prayer to God.

Many examples of this kind, we have in the Scriptures. *Hannah* prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore; she spoke in her Heart, and her Voice was not heard. *David* remember'd God upon his Bed, and meditated on him in the Night-Watches. *Abraham* was alone, when he stood before the Lord and prayed for Sodom. *Jeremiah's* Soul wept in secret Places, for the pride of his People. And *Peter* went up upon the House top to pray about the sixth Hour. All these are written for our Learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

We are not obliged always to be upon our knees, but we ought once every Day at least, to retire into some secret Place, and perform this important Duty. And, when we do this, it will be an effectual means of increasing our Faith; will make us perfectly resign'd to the Will of Providence, and ready to perform all possible acts of kindness to our fellow Creatures. When we come out of the Closet to worship God in the Family, or to the public worship in Church, we are then, much better prepared for it, than if we had neglected this Duty; the public Ordinances would be more improving to us, and we should relish religious Exercises with greater Pleasure.

What

What can tend more to alleviate an afflicted Mind, which is perhaps, labouring under the pressure of *Losses* and *Disappointments*, under *Sickness*, or some *bodily Pain*, than to retire in *secret* and vent its *Grief*, and implore the divine Assistance? And what greater *Comfort* can there be to a Man, than to think that he is addressing himself to a gracious *Father*, who has promised to *reward him openly* for such secret Acts of Piety? The bountiful Creator, will, most assuredly *reward him openly* in *this Life*, or that which is to *come*.

Every one has something in his *Constitution* or *Situation*, that subjects him to *particular Temptations*, which requires that he should be very *watchful* over himself; to give a due attention to his *thoughts*, *words*, and *actions*, and to keep a strong Guard where he finds himself most exposed to Danger. And how is he to *do* this, unless he retires into his *Closet* to examine his *Actions*, and pray to the supreme Being to guard and protect him?

If we will be followers of *Christ*, and those good Men whose *Examples* are recorded in *Scripture* for our imitation, we must needs think ourselves under the highest Obligation to pray in *secret*. And when we accustom ourselves to this, we shall obtain an habitual Temper of *Devotion*; so that whenever we catch ourselves in a *fault*, we shall naturally address our Minds to God in a *penitential Ejaculation*:
And

And this we may do in *Company* as well as in the *Gloset*.

As *Prayer* is the *Life* of *Religion*, so short *Ejaculations* are the *Life* of *Prayer*. And frequency of *Prayer* requires that we should offer up short *Ejaculations* to God. We have abundant Instances of this sort in *Scripture*, especially in the Book of *Psalms*. Holy *David* took occasion from almost every Circumstance of *Life*, to break out into pathetic starts of *Devotion*, which kept his Heart continually Warm. When he was in *distress*, he would comfort himself after this Manner: *Why art thou cast down, O my Soul; put thy Trust in God.* Upon the receipt of any singular *Blessing*, he would say, *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits.* When he was in *heaviness* he would think upon God. When his Heart was vexed he would complain, in some such words as these: *The sorrows of my Heart, O God, are enlarged; O bring thou me out of all my Troubles.* As soon as he was delivered from his Troubles, he would say, *Turn again then, unto thy Rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath sustained thee.* Every observation that occurred to his Mind upon God, Nature, and himself, generated the most rapturous exclamations of *Praise* and *Thanksgiving*. The *Publican* smote upon his breast, and cried out, *God be Merciful to me a Sinner.* Our Saviour expressed himself in short Petitions, making frequent Stops and
Inter-

Intermissions : Father, if thou be willing, remove this Cup from me, &c. And again; Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. St. Stephen also, when he prayed for his Murderers, said, Lord Jesus receive my Spirit : Lay not this sin to their Charge.

From these Instances, we see how *necessary* it is to call frequently upon God in *short Ejaculations*. And let it be considered, that God regards the temper of the *Soul* more than the *length* of a Prayer : The *short ejaculation* of the *Publican*, was more acceptable than the *long Prayer* of the *Pharisee*.

Having, I think, made it appear, that *private Prayer* is a great Christian Duty, I shall now,

Secondly, Shew that every *Governor* of a *Family* is bound to call every one of his *Household* together, and offer up their *joint Prayers* to God for his *Blessing* and *Protection*.

And this, because it is the *Duty* of every *Christian*, let him be in what *station* soever, to promote *Piety* and *Religion*, the *Glory* of *God*, and the *Welfare* and *Happiness* of his *fellow-Creatures*. A *King*, as *Supreme*; a *Clergyman*, as the *Pastor* of his *Parish*; and a *Master*, as the head of his *Family*, are all, in their respective *Stations*, God's *Stewards*, and must give an *account* of their *Stewardship*. It therefore highly becomes them to act with that *Integrity* and *Uprightness*, which is justly expected of them, by their great *Lord* and *Master*, who will most assuredly

assuredly require the Blood of such as Perish through *their* neglect, at their Hands.

Every *Family* then, must be considered as a little *Parish*, and the *Governor* of it, (if I may so speak) a *Priest*; who is as much obliged to watch over the *spiritual Welfare* of those under his *Charge*, as a *Minister* of a *Parish* is over those of his *Flock*. *If any Man provide not for his own*, saith St. Paul, *and especially for those of his own House, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*. And I am sure he must deny the *Faith* every day, who neglects to provide for the *spiritual Welfare* of his *Family*, in not instructing them in the Principles of Religion, and calling them together every *Morning* and *Evening* to implore God's Blessing and Protection.

How unbecoming a *Christian* must that Man be, who can see his *Family* disperse of an *Evening* without any Religion, and meet again of a *Morning*, like the other *Animals* about his House only to be fed; and never think of making so much as the poor returns of a *grateful Heart* for all the Blessings he enjoys from his most gracious and bountiful Creator.

When *this* is the case, (and God knows it is too much the case) it is a sad indication of a latent *Infidelity*, which, if not speedily rooted out, will, I am afraid, be the ruin of many Families.

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What

What a dreadful account must *he* expect will be required of him, by his *Creator* and *Judge*, who not only neglects his *Duty* in this respect, but, by his bad *Example*, encourages his *Wife*, his *Children*, and *Servants*, to forget their *Maker* and *live without God in the World*? Surely, every *Master* of a *Family* shou'd lay this home to his serious *Consideration*! But alas! go into many *Houses*, and, I am afraid, we may say as *Abraham* said to *Abimelech*, *Surely the Fear of God is not in this Place*! So far from finding any *Family Worship*, we shall find *Strife*, *Contention*, and *Animosity*, prevail; so far from hearing the *Language of Charity*, that we may hear the *Reputation* and *good Name* of some one of our *Neighbours* treated with cruel *Aspersions*, and wicked *Calumny*.

This is not to act like that devout Man *Cornelius*, who *feared God with all his House*, and *pray'd to God always*. It is not following the *Example* of *Job*, who *when the days of the Feasting of his Sons and Daughters were gone about*, offered *burnt Offerings*, according to the number of them *all*, for fear that they might have committed some *sin* during the time of their *Mirth* and *Jollity*: And this he did not *once* or *twice*, but *Continually*. Neither is it acting like *Joshua*, who declared, that *as for himself and his House, they would serve the Lord*. But it is acting, (I cannot say like *Heathens*; for they even at this *Day*, have their *household Gods*,

Gods, and call upon them Morning and Evening) but like Persons who have no serious thoughts of *God* and *Religion*, and, by the most monstrous *Ingratitude*, declare themselves unworthy of his Blessing and Protection.

How is the *Blessing* of *God* to be expected upon a *Family*, who have no *thoughts* of him ? Is there not much greater reason to expect a *Curse* ?

What ! though *God* sends his *rain upon the Just*, and on the *Unjust* ; grants many an ungrateful Sinner an abundance of outward enjoyments ; such as *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Pleasure* ; and delivers him from many *Calamities*, and sustains him in *bodily Health*, yet these enjoyments commonly prove a *snare* to him, by his *abusing* them to wicked purposes ; and though, in this *Life*, he may have his *fill* of worldly enjoyments, yet he may wish hereafter, that he never had been *Rich*, *Great*, and *Prosperous* ; and find, to his unspeakable *Grief*, that he has no Portion allotted him in the *Kingdom of Heaven* !

Many imagine, that if they offer up their Prayers to *God* in *private*, it is sufficient ; but this is to act like a *Hermet*, or one who shuts himself up in a *Cloister*, and cares for none but himself. For though a Man may be very exact in his own *private Devotions*, and trust to each one of his *Family* to do the like, yet he may be *deceived* ; and if he is *deceived*, he will

have no *Prayer* at all in his Family, at least none but his *own*. And, tho' *sin lies at the Door* of every one in his *House*, who neglects to pray in *secret*, yet it will be *his* fault that there is this neglect. And the Miscarriages of many Families, it may reasonably be presumed, proceed from this Source: *Children* grow undutiful, Idle, and Wicked; *Servants* disobedient, guilty of *eye service*, as *men pleasers*, and not *fearing God*. The Governor of the Family loses that *Respect* which is justly his *due*; and which, if he had kept up a Sense of *Religion* in his House, he wou'd, in all probability, never have had reason to *complain* of. For, when *Children* and *Servants* are taught Duty and Obedience for *Conscience* sake, they will then, chearfully act agreeable to their Stations. And tho' after all endeavours to make Children and Servants *Religious*, they shou'd prove *otherwise*, he has the comfortable Satisfaction to think he has done his *Duty*; and that God, the righteous Judge, will *reward* him for it at last.

Besides, every *Family*, as so many Servants of God united under one *Head*, have all some *common Sins* to confess, some *common Blessings* to ask, some *common Dangers* to fear, and some *common Mercies* to give thanks for; it is therefore highly reasonable that the Governor should call them together, as many as can be at leisure, *twice a Day*, in the *Morning* and in the *Evening*; and, by himself, or some one of the Family,

mily, confess their Sins to God, offer up their Prayers for what they want, and their Thanksgivings for what they enjoy.

Gratitude and self *Interest* require this.

Gratitude for those common Blessings which they enjoy from the best of Beings; for their *Existence*, their *Health*, their continual *Preservation*, and, above all, for their *Redemption* from Sin and Death, by the Blood of *Christ*.

Self-Interest also requires this.

For promoting *Family Religion*, is the best means of promoting the *Temporal* as well as the *Eternal* Welfare of the whole Family; because *Godliness* has the promise of the *Life* that now is, as well as that which is to come. And, on the other hand, when it is neglected, we may reasonably expect, that God will, according to the Prophet *Jeremiah*, pour out his fury upon the Families that call not upon his Name.

And not only the reasonableness of the Duty, but the *Practice* of our Blessed Saviour, and the example of the primitive Christians, enforce it. We read that our Saviour was often alone praying with his *Disciples*, who were then his little Family. And the primitive Christians were so Exemplary in this particular, that St. Paul, in his Epistles, often styles the House of such Families, a Church; Salute the Brethren, says he, which are in *Laodicea*, and *Nympas*, and the Church which is in his House, and in several other places.

I think

I think I need say no more to convince you that *Family Prayer* is a Christian Duty, I shall therefore, proceed in the

Third Place, To consider the *Objections* that may be made to this Duty.

And one may be, that as *Family Prayer* is now almost totally *disused*, at least by the generality of those who profess themselves to be Members of the *Church of England*, a Man who attempted to introduce this in his Family, would be looked upon, by his neighbours, as a singular, precise, Fellow: And, perhaps, be branded with the name of a *Methodist*.

Now, as to the *singularity* of it, I am willing to hope, that it is not so *singular* as many imagine: I hope there are many Families who make a Conscience of performing this Duty, and yet are no *Methodists*. Strange! That what has been universally acknowledged, as *fit* and *reasonable*, by the best and wisest of Men, and enforced by the Example of *Christ*, should, in these days, be thought an exercise only becoming a *mad Enthusiast*.

Surely, This is doing great Honour to the Cause of *Methodism*, and is a great *reproach* to us of the established Church. What! cannot a Man worship God in his Family, without being a *Methodist*? Surely he *can*. It only becomes a *Methodist* to assert such a thing; and too many of them, I am afraid, have too much *cause* to assert it.

However,

However, if we will consider, we shall easily be persuaded, that the *disuse* of Family Religion, is as much chargeable upon every *individual* Governor of a Family, as it is upon the *generality*; because every Governor that *omits* it, contributes to make it so much the more *General*: Therefore, has no reason to charge it upon his *Neighbours*.

A Man cannot be justified in his *neglect* of this Duty, because he fears to be *singular*. Had *Noah* feared to be singular, when God commanded him to build an *Ark*, for the preservation of his *Family*, they must have peris'd in the *Deluge*. *Joshua* did not fear to be *singular*, when he spoke the Words in the *Text*. If, saith he, it seem Evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this Day whom you will serve, whether the Gods which your Father's served, that were on the other side of the Flood, or the Gods of the *Amorites*, in whose Land ye dwell: But as for me, and my House, we will serve the Lord. And this resolution of his, had that good Effect upon the *People*, that they likewise, unanimously agreed to serve the Lord: And were a few Governors of Families to follow the Example of *Joshua*, they might also, excite more to do so.

I am aware but of one more Objection, and that is, that it *Interferes* with our worldly *Business*. "Men who are obliged to earn their Bread with the Sweat of their Brows, must
" attend

“ attend *early* to Business, therefore cannot find
“ *time* to pray with their Families.”

To this it may be answered, that though it may so happen, that a Man cannot attend his Family of a *Morning*, yet he may depute some one in his House, to perform this Duty in his *Absence*; and, in the *Evening*, he can always be present *himself* when his Work is done, which is never so late as to exclude *Family Worship*: And he will find more satisfaction in this, than in spending his Time at a *public House*, as is generally the Case.

As to such as are not obliged to bodily Labour, and Gentlemen of *Fortune*; our *Nobility*, and such like *great Families*, they are utterly *inexcusable*, and can by no means, acquit themselves to their own *Consciences*, or in the sight of God. Give me leave now, in the

Last Place, To apply what has been said, to your serious Consideration.

Are you not all desirous of making a suitable Provision for your *Children*? Do not Men, in general, strive to accumulate *Wealth*, to give their *Children* a *good Education*, and set them up in the World? And shou'd you not much more, be careful to instruct them in the Principles of *Religion*; to give them an early Sense of *Piety*, and a just reverence of *God*? How monstrously inconsistent then is it, to be continually anxious about their *temporal Prosperity*, and, at the same time, neglect their *better Part*,
their

their precious and immortal *Souls*? But when Men do so, it shews that they have no true notion of Religion *themselves*; for if they had, if *the Love of God were shed abroad in their own Hearts*, it wou'd naturally lead them to do their utmost to provide for the *spiritual Welfare* of others, and especially those of their *own House*.

We are apt to complain when our *Servants* are unjust to us; and yet, who can be more unjust than those, who, in return for their *Servants Labours*, take no care to provide for their inestimable *Souls*?

The time will come, when they shall know they ought to have given them some *spiritual*, as well as *temporal Wages*: And that if any of them are lost through the Governor's neglect, he will most assuredly be called to an *account* for it.

The Blessing of God upon our *Families*; the good Success of our honest endeavours in procuring a comfortable *Subsistence*; and, above all, a peaceful Conscience, and a glorious prospect of Futurity, depend, in a great measure, upon Family Religion.

But if neither the favour of God, our temporal Prosperity, and the good of our Children and Servants, will have any *Effect* upon us, perhaps the Consideration of a future *Judgment* at the Bar of Heaven, before which all must appear, may have some influence upon us. *We must all*, says the *Apostle*, *appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; there to answer for*

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the deeds done in the Body, whether they be Good, or whether they be Evil. If this be the case, (and no one can disprove it) how then will that Servant, who was made Ruler over his Lord's Household, and neglected to give them Meat in due Season, excuse himself before his Lord, when he comes? He may perhaps, with the utmost Horror and Despair, behold the Wife of his Bosom, his Children, who were his Crown and Delight, and his Servants attributing their Condemnation to his neglect and bad Example: And then, what can he expect but to be Cut in Sunder, and his Portion appointed him with the Hypocrites.

Let these, and every other important Consideration, have a due Effect upon your Minds: You will then, I am persuaded, be ready to say in the Words immediately following the Text; *God forbid that we shou'd forsake the Lord: And again, Nay, but we will, with our several Households, Serve the Lord.* Now, unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his Glory, with exceeding Joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and ever. Amen.





S E R M O N V I I I .

IN WHICH IS SET FORTH

T H E

Nature and Reasonableness

O F

P U B L I C W O R S H I P .



1 Timothy ii. 1.

I exhort therefore, that first of all, Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks be made for all Men.

THESE words evidently demonstrate, that St. Paul looked upon *Supplications* and *Prayers*, as a Duty incumbent on Mankind, arising from our dependance upon God as the giver and preserver of Life, and from whom, all the *Blessings* we enjoy are derived.

I will, says the Apostle, that Men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without Wrath and Doubting. And this, he tells us, is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the Truth. And when we make *Truth* the object of our Minds, it will naturally dictate to us, that there is a *Worship* due to the *supreme Governor* of the Universe.

I shall therefore, in consequence of the Exhortation, in my Text, endeavour to prove,

First, That there is a *Worship* due from the *Creature* to the *Creator*. And,

Secondly,

Secondly, I shall point out in what *Manner* that *Worship* is to be performed, so as to be likely to please God, and Benefit ourselves.

First, I am to prove that there is a *Worship* due from the *Creature* to the *Creator*. And this is evident from the *practice* of all Nations in the World. There never was a *Nation*, that acknowledged a *Deity*, but what had some method of paying him *Adoration*; and, by proper dispositions of Mind; by some exterior forms of *Worship*, acknowledged his *Supremacy*, adored his *Excellencies*, and intreated his *Bounty* and *Protection*, as *dependent*, though *unworthy* Objects. All Nations, says holy David, whom thou hast made, shall come and *Worship* before thee, and shall glorify thy Name; for thou art great and dost wondrous Things: Thou art God alone.

But notwithstanding this general Sense of Mankind, this present Age abounds with a set of Men who entertain very loose Sentiments with regard to the Obligations of *Religion*, in general, and of *Christianity*, in particular. “ They tell you, that this Custom of *Worshipping* the “ *Deity* had its rise from *fear* and *superstition*; “ that designing Men, having represented the “ *Almighty* as a rigorous and severe Sovereign, “ delighting in the *Miseries* of his *Creatures*; “ the ignorant and timorous Multitude were “ *scared* into these devout and enthusiastic “ Practices; which, say they, to *thinking* Men, “ appear

“ appear absurd and useless ; since God, from
 “ his *Omniscience*, must know the *wants* of his
 “ Creatures, and from his *Goodness*, must be
 “ ready to supply them, if they deserve it,
 “ without asking.” In answer to this, if we
 consider how this Custom of Worshipping the
Deity, has prevailed in *all Ages* ; amongst per-
 sons of the greatest Depravity of Morals, as
 well as the most Serious and Considerate :
 Amongst the Wifest and most Inquisitive, as
 well as the Unthinking and Credulous ; it will
 be a fair *Presumption*, if not a strong *Evidence*,
 that *Reason* gave birth to this practice, and not
Superstition, as these Men affirm.

And as to the observation that God knows
 the *Wants* of his Creatures, and is always ready
 to *relieve* them, without being *solicited*, this
 may be granted ; and yet it is no Objection to
 the *fitness* and *necessity* of this Practice, because
 it is suitable to the *nature* and *condition* of Man,
 and the *relation* he stands in towards God. For,
 does not common Gratitude require that we
 shou'd express our *Thankfulness* for all the Bless-
 ings we enjoy from our most gracious and
 bountiful Benefactor ? Shou'd we not Glorify
 that best of Beings, who gave us *Existence* ;
 who continually *preserves* us, and gives us every
 comfort of Life ? Surely we shou'd. And,
 though our expressions of Gratitude are of no
 Advantage to *him*, yet he is highly *pleased* with
 them, and *requires* them of us, as it testifies our
 sense

sense of his *power* and *will* to do for us *beyond what we ask or think*. For though our *Creator* might supply all our necessities without *asking*, yet it would be very great *Presumption* in any one to expect that he *Will*.

To make this familiar to our Senses : Suppose a Man in want of the *common Necessaries* of Life, and yet so *Proud* as to be above *acknowledging* his Wants ; and so insolent as to despise and affront the Person who shou'd (though unsolicited) send him *Relief*, what Man is there amongst you, that wou'd pity or regard him ? And shall the *ungodly*, who are so proud that they care not for God, expect that he will care for them ? *Reason* tells us the contrary ; not to remark, that *Christ* has told us, we must *ask* before it will be given, and must *knock* before it will be opened unto us.

Hence it is plain, that *Gratitude* is a Duty both of *natural* and *revealed* Religion ; and it is so acceptable both to God and Man, that it is the ready way to obtain greater Benefits from both ; whereas *Ingratitude* is so base, that it stops the current of favours for ever ; for an *ungrateful* Person renders himself *unworthy* of any more.

We see then, that *Reason*, *Gratitude*, and the *practice* of all Nations, prove that there is a *Worship* due to the great *Creator*.

Besides, have we not the Example of *Christ* himself, who has expressly told us, that it is our
Duty

Duty to follow his steps? Have we not the practice of *Prophets* and *Apostles*, who lived and acted continually under the immediate *Inspiration* and *Direction* of God? Have we not all these, I say, written for our *Instruction*? And not only that, but we have express directions, both in the *old* and *new Testament*, for the Duty of Prayer.

Thus in the *old Testament*, O thou that hearest Prayer, says holy David, unto thee. shall all flesh come. And in the prophecy of Ezekiel, when God had promised to do many things for his People, he tells them, I will yet for this be enquired of by the House of Israel, to do it for them.

In the *new Testament*, we meet with variety of the plainest Precepts for this Duty. In the xviii. Chapter of St. Luke, our Saviour, by a Parable, shews that Men ought always to Pray. In another place, he commands us to Watch and Pray. And it is St. Paul's desire that Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all Men.

One wou'd think there was very little need to take either Time or Pains in proving that God ought to be Worshipped. But the necessity of saying what I have said, will evidently appear, when we consider that, with too much Truth, it may be asserted, that in every Community, there are Men to be found who glory in their Ingratitude towards their God, from whom they hold Life and all the Blessings that attend

attend it ; and to whom they are more indebted for their *Being*, than to their *Father* and *Mother* of whom they were Born. But now, allowing that God ought to be Worshipped, let us consider in the

Second Place, How that Worship is to be performed, so as to please him and benefit ourselves.

As God is to be *Worshipped*, some *Method* must be observed, and some *Day* set apart for that purpose.

As to the *Method*, St. Paul has laid it down in my Text : It must consist of *Supplications*, *Prayers*, *Intercessions*, and *giving of Thanks* : All which, include *Confession* of our Sins to God, *Supplication* to him to avert any Calamity, *Intercession* for our fellow Creatures, and *Thanksgiving* for all the Blessings we enjoy.

Thus the *Worship* of God is divided into several Branches, which, if it be done with Propriety, Regularity, and without Perplexity, it will be acceptable to God and beneficial to ourselves. And this must be done in a *public* and *solemn Assembly* of the *Individuals* of every Community ; for all *Societies* of Men, (as such) are as equally under the *Guardianship* of Providence, as any *single* Person who *composes* that Society. They have (as a Community) their *dependancies*, their *miseries*, and *mercies* ; all which, shou'd, in social Worship, be acknowledged. There are *public* Sins, which demand

public Humiliation; and *public Blessings*, for which there ought to be *public Thanksgivings*.

But it may be said, perhaps, that if every *Individual* will but take care of *himself*, by supplicating his own *Wants*, and deprecating his own *Miseries*, God will protect and bless him, though he paid no regard to *public* and *solemn Assemblies*: It must be from a persuasion of this Nature, that so many *neglect* the public Worship.

But I must tell you, that it is as necessary to *Unite* in acts of *Piety*, as in the support of *Justice*, or the promotion of any common *Good*. For, by this means, a general Sense of our *dependance* upon *God* and dread of his *displeasure*, is kept alive; which is the pillar of Government, and the foundation of Peace and Regularity in the World. Let those who *dispute* this, cast their Eyes upon the several Nations, or tribes of *Savages* that are in the World, and see what *anarchy* and *confusion* prevails amongst *them*. And, without this method of *serving God*, we may naturally conclude, that in a short Time, we shou'd lose all *sight*, all *sense* of a Deity, and that the Ignorance and Barbarity of *Indians* wou'd prevail amongst us. But God forbid that ever such a misfortune shou'd come to this *Kingdom*, or to any *Nation* who have received the light of the Gospel! Blessed be God! there are many serious and thinking Men, who are convinced of the *Necessity* and great *Importance* of public Worship; who attend

tend it regularly, and make a Conscience of their Duty, notwithstanding all the attacks of *atheistical Libertines*.

But though Men, in general, are convinced that public Devotion is absolutely *neccessary*, and of the utmost *importance*, yet they differ much in their opinions of the method of *performing* it; and when a young Christian beholds so many different *Sectaries*, all of them Tenacious of their *own* Opinions, it is enough to *stagger* him in his Notions of *Religion*, and to create *doubts* in his Mind what course to pursue. In this Case, let him consider what *true Religion* is. *What does the Lord require of him? but to do Justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with his God.* And to this let him add a firm and unshaken *Faith* in the *Merits* and *Satisfaction* of *Christ*. Then, if his *Devotions*, whether *public* or *private*, be performed with decency and propriety, he need not doubt of being everlastingly rewarded in the *Kingdom of Heaven*.

No one can reasonably object to the *solemn Prayers*, and *decent Ceremonies* of the *Church of England*, which are so admirably contrived to excite *Devotion* in every pious Mind.

Let the Advocates for *Extempore* Prayers, defend them if they can. We see, that notwithstanding the *Incoherency*, *Tautology*, and *Weakness* of them, which evidently demonstrate that they are not the dictates of the *Holy Spirit*, there are Men credulous enough to look upon
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them

them *as* such ; though, if they wou'd but reflect, they must know that they do not pray *themselves* : Their *Teachers* pray indeed, but they only *hear* Prayers in the very same manner as they hear the *Sermon*. Now, as *Prayer* is *speaking* or *conversing* with God, unless *I* speak to him *myself* ; unless my own *Soul* discourse with him, *I* cannot be said to *Pray*. For no one can be so Senseless as to Imagine, that if I was in Company with two Persons who were *discoursing* together, and not utter a Word to *either* of them, that I *discoursed* with them. And is it not strange, that so groundless a Conceit, shou'd ever enter into Men's Heads, as that *hearing* another Pray shou'd be *Praying* ? Yet it is manifest, from daily Experience, that the generality of Mankind *do* think that they *Pray*, when they only hear *another* Pray.

We have a *form* of *Prayer*, and the *Congregation* may, if they Please, make themselves perfectly *acquainted* with it before hand, and may *join* with the *Minister* in every Word, and, by that means, make both *theirs* and *his* a *joint* *Prayer*. But a Man that offers up an *extempore* Prayer, or one of his own *Composing*, only *Prays himself*, and the Minds of his *Hearers* must be constantly employ'd to know what he is going to *say*, and *judging* of it ; consequently, never can have time *themselves*, by the direction of their own Minds to God, to offer up any part of *his* Prayer ; much less can the *Minister's* and
People's

People's be a *joint Prayer*, because he must have actually offered up every *part* of it, before *they* can tell what he will *say*.

But notwithstanding that we have a *most excellent Liturgy*, yet it is too visible that many in our *Churches* do not *Pray*. If we may judge from outward Appearance, we may conclude that when People are *Gazeing* about them, *Whispering*, *Lolling*, or using any *irreverent Postures*, that they do not direct their *Minds* to *God* while the *Minister* is repeating the *Words*: And, when they do not, they cannot be said to *Pray*. A Man may *draw near to God with his Lips*, and his *Heart* be far from him; his *Mind* may be intent upon *other things*: And, when this is the Case, it is downright *Mockery*, consequently a very great *Sin*.

As there can be no *Religion* without *Mode* or *Ceremony*, so no *pious Christian* will neglect to comply with the *decent Ceremonies* of the *Church*, such as *kneeling* at *Prayers*, and *standing* when we sing the *Praises* of our great *Creator*. When People *neglect* to do this, it is no uncharitable Assertion to say, they have *then* no thoughts of *God* at all, at least, if they have, they are very *Loose* and *Profane*.

We see then, that *God* is to be *Worshipped*, and that not *privately* only, but in a *public* and *social Manner*; and, according to *St. Paul*, it must be done *decently*, and *in order*. Some time then, of Course, must be *consecrated* and set apart

apart for this purpose; and this, by general Practice of *Christians*, is *one Day in seven*. The *Jews*, by divine appointment, observed the *seventh Day*, but that Obligation terminated with the *Hebrew Nation*; for *Christ*, after completing the work of our *Redemption*, by rising on the *first day of the week*, and afterwards by his miraculous Mission of the *holy Ghost*, on the *first day of the week*, which we this day *Commemorate*; *Christ*, I say, by this means, has translated the religious Observation of the *seventh Day* to the *first day of the week*: And the moral Obligations of the *fourth Commandment*, with regard to the *Jewish Sabbath*, are equally binding on that of the *Christian*.

On this Day, we are not to follow our *Occupations*, but are to rest from our *Labours*, not only *ourselves*, but our *Servants*, and our *Cattle*; by which we shall observe the two incumbent Obligations of *Piety* and *Mercy*. And, what Day can be so proper for *Christians* to assemble together and Worship God, as that on which their *Redeemer* rose from the Dead? Since, on this glorious event, all their *Hopes*, all their *Prospects*, and the *truth* of their Religion depends.

Now, from what has been observed, *this* must be the natural Conclusion, that to observe a stated *form* and *time* of Worship, and to perform it with *decency*, is *highly reasonable*; because it keeps up in our Minds a constant *Sense* of our
dependance

dependance upon God, and the Obligations we owe him. It is this which influences the Conduct of a good Man, and makes him set God always before him; whereas the Wicked is so proud that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his Thoughts: He neglects the means of Grace, and by so doing, grows every day more loose in his notions of Piety and Virtue.

But a Man that attends the public Worship of God, may, by the Lectures which are there delivered, be put upon his Guard against the dangerous Snares of Vice, which are laid open to the view of the unguarded and inconsiderate; Virtue is exalted, Vice exposed, and the duties of Morality are enforced by the glorious Sanctions of eternal Happiness to the Good, and everlasting Misery to the Wicked.

I know it is allow'd on all hands, that public Sermons are very useful and fit Instructions for the Vulgar and Ignorant; but we are told that they are useless with respect to Men of Reason and Reflection. That is, in plain English, they are of no Service at all; for who is the Man, if he may judge for himself, that will place himself in the Class of the Ignorant and Thoughtless? I fear, if this was to be admitted, as a sufficient plea of Absence, we shou'd have but a thin Congregation; for people wou'd stay at home to avoid being thought Ignorant. But this plea of vanity must not be admitted; because there is no Man so deep read to whose memory some important

portant Truths may not be *discovered*; or, at least, represented in a light in which they were never *considered*; and perhaps, in a light fairly adapted to their own *Temper*s, and which, consequently, may lead them to good and worthy *Actions*.

No Man is so compleatly Master of every Subject, as that nothing *New* can be suggested to him, and as *Prejudice* and *Prepossession* are misfortunes that attend the most *finished* Education, something in a studied discourse, may be offered, if not immediately to enlarge his *understanding*, at least to put him upon a *cool examination*, by which his *wrong Bias* may be removed.

However, after all, *public Lectures* must be looked upon by far the less noble and sublime part of *divine Service*, if it can be called any part of it at all; though, by some *Sectaries*, the *Sermon* is thought to be the *principle* part of their *public Worship*; at least, one would *imagine* so, since their whole Service consists almost entirely of *Preaching*.

But a judicious Person, will easily perceive, that the whole design of *public Lectures*, is to persuade Men, by proper arguments, to a constant attendance upon the *public Worship*, and to every other Christian Duty; therefore, to attend to a *Sermon*, and, in a Manner, neglect the *Prayers*, is to confound the *Means* with the *End*, which is a manifest Absurdity.

Men

Men shou'd be careful, when they come into the *House of God*, that it be with a design to *Worship him*, and not only out of *Curiosity* to hear a *Sermon*, as I fear, too many do. How many *idle People* are there, who seldom, or never, put their foot within side a Church Door, unless it be through a *Case of Necessity*? Is not all that corruption of *Morals*, which has overspread this *Kingdom*, owing to the neglect of this important duty of *social Worship*?

Many there are, who, by this neglect, have blotted out of their Minds all distinction between *Good* and *Evil*, and have commenced cool and deliberate *Libertines*. They have so far debased their notions of *Religion*, as to look upon it as a duty that may be observed by the *bye*, when neither their *Pleasures* nor their *Profits* interfere. They have clouded their *Reason* so far as to take a *Pleasure* in deceiving themselves in those points that are of the highest *Consequence* to them, as if the safest way to avoid a *Precipice*, was to run blind-fold by it. In their *worldly Concerns*, they are *diffident* and *timorous*; in their *religious Conduct*, they are *rash* and *credulous*; in *worldly affairs* they deliberately weigh every Circumstance; in *Religion*, they are so far from *thinking* or *reflecting*, that they venture their immortal Treasures upon *occasional Reflections*.

These are the Characters of such as regard not God, but make him only a *secondary* or

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subservient Deity, and sacrilegiously bestow upon *Sense* and *Appetite*, that Worship to which he alone has a Claim.

To Men of this Stamp, all arguments drawn from *Religion*, will prove useless and *unavailing*, and it will be next to an *Impossibility* to make them entertain the most *distant thought* of a Reformation; because they do not perceive their *disorder*, but rather *approve* of their Conduct; and, unless our irregularities are clearly *seen*, and deeply *lamented*, we must for ever remain *Incurable*.

Astonishing! That Man, who boasts of his Reason, shou'd act so trifling and inconsiderate a part; shou'd be so careless of his eternal Concerns, not to say, bent upon his own *Destruction*,

However, let us not all be thus Inconsiderate, but rather let us be persuaded to act as becomes *reasonable Creatures*, by a frequent and chearful discharge of this reasonable and important Duty of *social Worship*; and then we shall be better fitted to join (with transporting and ineffable delight) among the heavenly Host, in singing eternal *Hallelujahs*, under the Smiles of our God and Redeemer. To whom be ascribed, &c.





SERMON IX.

ON THE

Governing Providence of GOD,

Preached in the

ISLAND of JAMAICA,

ON THE

FAST - DAY, appointed in memory of the
GREAT STORM, which happened there on
the 28th of AUGUST, 1712.



Revelations xix. part of the 6th and 7th.

*Hallelujah: For the Lord God omnipotent
reigneth. Let us be Glad and Rejoice.*

IF we take a survey of Mankind in the *Majority*, we will find, that it is the universal opinion, that this World was formed by an eternally existing Creator. And the reason is, because no Man, in his Senses, cou'd ascribe that which hath all the Characters of a wise *design* and *contrivance* imprinted on it, to the effect of blind *Chance*, or the fortuitious concurrence of *Atoms*.

But you will find many, in all Ages, and of every religious persuasion, so perplexed about the good and evil Accidents of Life, as to doubt whether this *Creator* gives himself any concern in governing the World now he has made it. And yet, what can be more absurd; or more evidently display the short-sightedness of Man? If there was no supreme Intelligence; no providential Eye over the Universe; it must suffer infinite Distractions, undergo numberless Calamities; and, before an Age cou'd pass, must have returned to its primitive *Chaos*.

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It must be granted, to besure, that the same divine power that *created* all things in the beginning, might have commanded, that they shou'd continue in the same regularity and order to the end of Time, without the continual Interposition of Providence to support them. So indeed, the Almighty, if he pleased, might still Create Man at *full Stature*, as he did *Adam*: But, is it a Reason because he *could*, that he *ought* to do so? He might have ordered the *Garden of Eden* to have produced all the necessities of Life, and to have retained its primitive Verdure and prolifick Quality, without being cultivated by *Adam*: But, as it wou'd have shared the fate of all Gardens, being *neglected*, which are always over-run with *Weeds*, and unfit for use 'till dressed and cleansed: So it is with this glorious Fabrick of the *World*, and the infinitely variety of *Creatures* in the upper and lower Regions: They are not preserved in their original Splendour and Beauty without a divine Superintendant: No, they are governed and supported by a power and providence, Admirable and Stupendious.

Besides, how is it consistent with the Attributes of Power and Goodness to be *present* in every place, where many wise momentous things are to be done, and yet do *nothing* at all?

Action is the Glory of every Being. *Idleness* and *Ease* are marks of *weakness* and *imperfection*. And, if it be more Majestic in an *earthly Prince*

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to exercise his Power, daily, in doing *Good*, rather than to stifle it in an inglorious *Indolence*, surely, it must be a *sublime* degree of Goodness, in the *King of Kings*, to sit at the helm of this floating Universe, and to steer it its motions with a steady and unerring hand.

We may, with as great propriety, imagine a *Sun* in the Firmament without *heat* or *light*, as a living *God* surrounding and penetrating all things, without ever exerting his active Powers, or shedding forth his vital Influence upon them.

Life is an *active* principle. And as *God* is the fountain of Life, is ever *Active*, and is in all places; he must, of course, *operate* every where: And, if he *operates* every where, that *operation* is a *universal Providence*.

All Nations of the World, says holy David, *shall remember and turn unto the Lord: And all the kindreds of the Nations shall Worship before thee.* And he assigns a *Reason* for their so doing, *for*, says he, *the Kingdom is the Lords: And he is the Governor among the Nations.* But to what purpose do they *Worship* him, if the Lord is not *present*? Or, if he is present, if he will not *Act*, nor Concern himself, about the affairs of this *World*, it must be a vain and idle thing to offer up any *Prayers* to him; consequently, the whole race of Mortals, excepting a few professed *Atheists* must be branded with *folly* and *stupidity*.

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As for his being *Governor among the Nations*, a *Log* might answer the purpose as well, if he does not exert his *Attributes*. For what doth that *Wisdom* signify, that *contrives* nothing? Or that *Power* which *performs* nothing? Or that *Goodness* which is *good for nothing*? Or that *Justice* which *distributes* nothing? In short, that *Deity* who hath neither *Wisdom*, *Power*, *Goodness*, nor *Justice*; or, which is the same thing, who makes no manner of *use* of them, is no better than a *dead* and *senseless Idol*, unworthy of the regard of a rational Being.

But this general Custom of *Prayer*, which prevails in *all Nations*, is a strong presumption, that there is a *universal active Mind* which prompts Mankind to *rely* upon and *implore* his protection: At least, it is a convincing *Proof* that the World, in general, allows a *divine Providence*; and it was this religious Persuasion, that led the *legislative Body* of this *Island** to enact the solemn Observance of this Day. † And, if *Atheists* and *Infidels*, (by whom, I mean those who deny a *Revelation*) will but consult *Plato*, *Socrates*, and many other *heathen Divines*, upon this important Point; they may, perhaps, be persuaded by those, (though they despise the *Christian* who advises them) to lay aside their *singularity*, and to unite in the general Opinion and Practice.

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* Jamaica.

† 28 August.

But, as for those who are *Christians*, and who, I wou'd hope, entirely make up the present *Congregation*; I must observe, that next to the *existence* of God, and the veracity of his *Word*, the belief of his *real Providence* enlarges the Mind, and gives us a just Apprehension of that *Power*, by which we are daily surrounded and protected.

And therefore, in the further prosecution of this Subject, I shall endeavour to demonstrate as brief as possible, that *Angels* and *Men*, both *Good* and *Evil*, are under the peculiar Government and Controul of the *Almighty*: That the *celestial* Luminaries, the *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars*, are kept in their regular Course and Order by his infinite *Wisdom* and *Power*: That the *Earth*, the *Air*, and the *Seas*, with all their stores and furnitures, are so far from being *beneath* his notice, that he often excites them to *Move* and *Act* to the Astonishment and Conviction of the most *hardened* of the Sons of Men.

In order to this, I shall have recourse to those *sacred Records* which are the foundation of our *Faith*; as they shou'd be of our *Practice*.

We have a great variety of beautiful hints and descriptions of God's *universal Rule*, in the holy *Scriptures*, particularly in the Book of *Psalms*. *The Lord hath prepared his Throne in the Heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all, Bless the Lord all ye his Angels, that excel in Strength, that do his Commandments, hearkening*
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to the Voice of his Word. Bless the Lord all ye his Hosts, ye Ministers that do his Pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his Works, in all places of his Dominions. But in the 148th Psalm, we are called upon, in a most pathetic and elegant manner, to Praise the Lord. There the glorious Angels in the heights of Heaven, are called upon; together with Sun, Moon, and Stars of Light: The Heaven of Heavens, and Waters that are above the Heavens, Dragons and all Deeps: Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Storms and Tempest: Beasts and all Cattle, creeping things and flying fowl. Kings, Princes, and Judges of the Earth. Young Men and Maidens, old Men and Children, are excited to praise the Lord, whose Glory is above the Earth and Heavens; who is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works; who fulfilleth the desire of them that fear him; will also hear their Cry and will save them.

So that here is a general Summons to the whole Universe; and a particular Encouragement to all the rational Inhabitants thereof, to pay their Homage to their awful Maker and Governor.

It may not be improper to observe to you, that it has been, and is still the Opinion of many learned and judicious Men, that God disposes and conducts most of the remarkable Events and Occurrences of this lower World, by the agency of invisible Spirits.

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Many of the antient *Philosophers*, being at a loss to account for the origine of *Evil*; through what contingency, necessity, or permission, it first came; and being once come, should still *continue* in the World; have ascribed it to the clashing and alternately prevailing power of *good* and *evil Spirits*; and this Opinion is strongly supported in diverse places of the *sacred Writings*: For as to the *good Angels*, they are expressly called *the Ministers of the Lord, that do his Pleasure*. And we have very early accounts of those glorious *Agents* being employ'd to *Serve* or *Punish*; to *Defend* or *Destroy* a good or perverse race of Mortals.

An Instance or two, in both respects may Suffice.

I would willingly avoid the least suspicion of Trespassing upon the Honour and Chastity of the Christian Religion. Therefore shall decline taking notice of *Apparitions* sent to particular Persons on secret and special Messages: Because, it may be objected, that *Enthusiasm* and *Superstition* too frequently usurp the throne of *Reason*; the one keeping the Soul under the Bondage of *implicit Faith*; the other of *fantastical Fear*. I shall therefore, only remark where those divine Messengers were sent on great and astonishing Occasions.

As, first, it was an *Angel*, at the command of the Lord, that at *Midnight*, smote all the first Born of the Egyptians; from the first Born of
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Pharaoh that sat on the Throne, unto the first Born of the Captive that was in the Dungeon; and likewise, all the first Born of Cattle.

Again, when the Lord was offended at David for numbering the People, and was determined to punish him, either with the *Famine, Sword, or Pestilence*: After David had made choice of the *Pestilence*, we are told, that God sent an *Angel to Jerusalem to destroy it*; and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld and repented him of the Evil, and said to the Angel that destroy'd; 'tis enough, stay now thine hand: And the Angel of the Lord stood at the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lift up his Eyes, and saw the Angel of the Lord stand between the Earth and the Heaven, having a drawn Sword in his hand stretched forth over Jerusalem.

It was an Angel that guarded the passage of Eden after Adam and Eve were turned out for their Transgression. And they were the same heavenly Messengers who were sent to Lot, to acquaint him with the design of God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. In short, numberless Instances might be given, of the Agency of good Angels who are commissioned, by their glorious Lord, to transact many awful Passages in the course of Providence. And it shou'd be a great comfort to good Men to reflect, that they are under the tuition and guardianship of these invisible Friends from their entrance into the World, till their arrival in Glory. *Take heed,*

says Christ, that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in Heaven, their Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven. They kindly Watch over us Night and Day, sleeping or waking, at times and seasons that we are not aware of: For we are told that the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. And at the close of this frail Life, they give their faithful and friendly Attendance on our dissolution, to conduct our naked Spirits, through Regions unknown to us, unto the heavenly Mansions: For, when Lazarus died, he was carried by the Angels into Abraham's Bosom.

And as there are good, so there are also evil Angels moving to and fro upon the Earth and the Air, whose daily Study is to annoy and ruin Mankind,

The Devil is called the Prince of the power of the Air; and we find, that having obtained leave of the Lord to afflict Job, one way among diverse others that he took, was to raise a Storm of Wind, and send a violent Gust from the Wilderness, which smote the four Corners of the House where the Sons and Daughters of Job were assembled, so that it fell and buried them in the Ruins.

In a word, this World is a common Theatre, where good and bad Men, good and evil Angels, act their respective parts according as they are permitted

permitted or restrained, by the sovereign Will and Power of God. For whether good *Angels* are directed, or evil *Angels* permitted to bring about the several incidents of *Life*; yet still it is the *Almighty Sovereign*, that either issues out the *Order*, or grants the *permission*. Nor is it any diminution of his *Glory* that such mighty things shou'd be done by the *Angelic Power*; it rather redounds more to the Honour of God that he hath made such Creatures, and endow'd them with faculties capable of producing such events.

But not only these *Aereal Beings*, but the *celestial Luminaries* are under the dominion and direction of God; and of this, the Lord gave a signal demonstration in the Days of *Joshua*, when the *Sun and Moon stood still* and ceased for a Time, to pursue the course set them by their awful Creator,

And, as the *Angels* and *heavenly Orbs*; so the *Globe* of this *Earth*, and the *Air* that fills the vast space between us and the *firmament*, are under the divine influence and direction.

One Instance may serve for all to give us Satisfaction in this Point. And that is the memorable *Deluge*, (whether partial, or universal, is not material) in the Days of *Noah*; when God broke up the bounds of the Sea, and opened the flood-gates of Heaven to destroy a wicked race of Men,

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But *Job* gives us a most lofty and elegant Description of the Power and Providence of the Creator. *He stretcheth out the North over the empty Place; and hangeth the Earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the Waters in his thick Clouds, and the Cloud is not rent under them. The pillars of Heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. Lo! these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him? But the thunder of his power who can understand?* And, speaking after the manner of Men, the Lord is represented as bringing the *Wind* out of his *Treasuries*, as if it had been laid up in Store, only to be brought out upon some special Occasions.

Thus have I laid before you God's *active* and *permissive Providence*, as running through the whole *Universe*, from the highest rank of Beings to the lowest and meanest things that are therein.

Give me a little more of your *Patience* and *Attention*, whilst I apply what has been said, to the occasion of the present Solemnity; which is to commemorate an astonishing *Storm of Wind* which fell out 54 Years ago, as on the Morning of this Day. It is not the design of this Solemnity, to represent the ruin and desolation that then threatened the Inhabitants of this *Island*; * or to fill your Minds with that Horror and Amazement which made the stoutest

* Jamaica,

stoutest Hearts to tremble; and, I dare say, caused many *profligate* Wretches to Pray unto the Lord, who were not used to call upon his Name.

Such a Representation is out of the power of *Art* to describe; nothing can truly paint it unto you, but such another dreadful Sight, which it is the design of this Day, to implore the Almighty to *avert* from us. May the Lord God hear our Prayer, and grant that none of us may ever feel the dreadful Power of such a tempestuous Wind!

The observance is of great use to keep up a lively Sense of such Judgments upon our Minds; which became the subject of Reason, of cool Thoughts, and wise Consideration, when the terror and frightfulness of it was over.

Judgments, (and such I call all Calamities of this Nature) cou'd never make a lasting *Reformation* in the World, were we concerned to remember them no longer than we *feel the Smart* of them. And whenever they happen, (whether the Cause be natural or supernatural) the *Punishment* is the same; and is attended with the same *moral* inferences or instructions.

Punishment ends with the *Smart*, and that puts an end to all whining and tragical Complaints. But this *alone* is the discipline of *Fools* and *Brutes*. The *Instruction* is for *Men*, and this is to last as long as Memory, Thought, and Reason exists. What could this *Storm* teach

teach those who *saw* and *felt* it, which it doth not teach a wise Man *still*? And what thoughts and devout Passions were proper *then*, which are not on *this* Day, a suitable expression and motive to our Devotion? For, is not God the *same* still? A just, a righteous Judge, who is *angry with the wicked every Day*, though he do not every Day bend his *bow*, and let fly his *Arrows*?

Though he do not every Day appear in his terrible Majesty, *riding upon the Cherubims, and flying upon the Wings of the Wind*. Yet, methinks, *one* such example might serve us for some *Agēs*, without expecting or desiring to be led to our Duty by a *repetition* of such dreadful Terrors.

But I really believe that the intention of our *Lawgivers*, in appointing these solemn *Assemblies*, would be more effectually answered, were it not for a confused and uncertain kind of *Infidelity*, which ascribes all such *Calamities* to the disasters of *Nature*, and leads Men to be more intent upon the *Weapon* than upon him that *Strikes*. But *Nature*, taken in the abstract, is an Expression for the *Deity*; and the *course of Nature*, as it is commonly called, means no more than the regularity of *his* works who made and governs all things. And, whatever unintelligent *natural* Causes may seem to *Effect*, it is not, in reality, done by them at all, but by the *Providence* of God.

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That the *Sun* runs its Course every day, is as strictly and properly the hand of *God*, as that it stood still at the desire of *Josbua*; and therefore, if we must have *Nature* to be something different from the *Ruler of the Universe*, whenever we see *Earthquakes*, *Storms*, and *Floods*, involve a whole Community in one general *Ruin*, we must not think that it is *Nature* working *per-versely* or *erroniously*; but overpowered by a *superior Rival*, and by the justly conquering Force of *another Nature*.

All *natural* Causes, are *Effects* produced by the Governing Providence of the *Supreme Being*, who often causes his Judgments to fall upon *Sinners*, that they may thereby learn *Righteousness*. Let not the *Libertine* then, depend so far upon his Power and *Wealth*, as to think *they* are able to shield him from the avenging Arm of the Almighty; neither let him think that any *Darkness*, (even the shadow of *Death*) can screen him from the *all-seeing Eye* of *God*! And let all those who are projecting Schemes of worldly *Wealth*, adding *House to House*, and *Field to Field*, calling them by their own Names, endeavouring thereby to perpetuate their Memory, neglecting at the same Time, the weighty concerns of the *Soul*: Let such, I say, consider how easily a powerful *God* can bury them in their *Houses*, or entomb them in that *Earth*, upon which they had fixed their Hearts and Names.

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But to compare small things with great for a Moment ; let us consider, that if the *Storm of Wind*, (which we now commemorate) was so dreadful as to fill all those who saw it, with Horror and Astonishment, think how dreadful that Scene must be, when all things shall be *dissolved*; the *Heavens pass away with a great Noise*, and the *Elements melt with fervent Heat*, the *Earth and the things that are therein, burnt up*! What horror must seize the Souls of Sinners, when the *Arch-Angel*, with the *Trump of God*, shall shake the whole *Creation*; when they shall call upon the *Rocks and Mountains to fall upon them*, to hide them from the *Wrath of God*, and the *Lamb*? Then they will see, (alafs too late!) their extream Folly and Madness in trusting to the perishing enjoyments of a World, the *Fashion of which so soon passeth away*.

But to a good Man, it is matter of great Joy and Comfort, that God is *gracious and merciful*, *slow to Anger*, and of *great Kindness*. He delights much to display his Glory in acts of Goodness and Bounty to his Creatures.

Judgments are his *strange Work* which makes the signal execution of them so very rare and extraordinary. And the way to have them rare is not to *forget* them; to learn Righteousness by the Calamities of others; to fear and tremble before that *God*, who is terrible in his Anger, and has all the ministers of Destruction at his Command.

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God grant that this, and every other Day's humiliation of the well disposed in this *Island*, may so effectually prevail upon the *Almighty*, that he may take the whole into his protection, for the sake of the few Righteous that are amongst us. In the confident expectation of which, let us join with the *Psalmist*, first in turning to God; and then sing with him, *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in Trouble; therefore we need not fear tho' the Earth be Moved: And though the Hills be carried into the midst of the Sea.* Amen.



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SERMON X.

S H E W I N G T H E

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Hebrews xii. part of the 1st Verse.

And the Sin which doth so easily beset us.

IN order to give you a clear light into the meaning of my Text, I think it necessary to observe to you, that in the foregoing Chapter, St. Paul having recited a number of examples eminent for fortitude and constancy; who (as he tells us) *by their Faith subdued Kingdoms, turned Armies to flight; stopped the mouths of Lions; endured cruel Mockings and Scourgings; and wandered about in Desarts and Mountains, clad in the skins of Sheep and Goats; of whom the World was not worthy; and for whom God had prepared a City.* Let us, says the Apostle, *seeing we are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses; let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience, the race that is set before us.* A Scheme of Speech that plainly alludes to the exercises of the Antients, wherein *Wrestling* and other feats of Manhood were performed. The *Metaphor* is obvious upon the slightest Inspection, Let us lay aside, not only every weight that fits heavy upon and oppresses us, but also the *sin*, which

which like a long Garment, hangs about the Affections, and entangles our Feet in running the race that is set before us.

Those sins which promise us Profit or Pleasure are, of all others, the most likely to prove the greatest Impediment in our Christian race; those, of all others, hang about us with the most cleaving Fondness; those, of all others, are put off with the forest reluctance.

The Apostle therefore, does in a particular Manner, alarm our Caution against these. He wou'd have us beware, more especially, of that sin, which brings the strongest Temptation with it; which, perhaps, by long acquaintance and familiarity, has got the Ascendent over us; and is the sin which doth so easily beset us. From which Words, I shall make the following Observations.

First, I shall observe, that every Man is addicted to some peculiar Lust; has his beloved sin which doth so easily beset him.

Secondly, I shall shew the danger of indulging this Lust. And, after making such useful reflections as the discourse shall naturally lead me to, shall close all, by enforcing the Apostle's exhortation; that so we may be persuaded to lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset us.

First then, I am to observe that every Man is addicted to some peculiar Lust; has his beloved sin which doth so easily beset him.

The great end design'd by *Religion*, and that which has long been aimed at by the *Philosophers*, is to frame and fashion us into *rational* Creatures ; to make us *Men* and to teach us to *Act* and *Live* agreeable to our Natures, by exalting *Reason* into the Throne, and rescuing the Mind, (that noble governing Part of us) from the base and slavish Tyranny of the Flesh.

But when may we hope to see this excellent Design in any tolerable degree accomplished ? Is there room to compliment human Nature upon any improvement, or advance towards *Perfection* ? Is it not sunk deeper into that degeneracy and corruption, which of old, was so passionately complained of, and lamented ?

Wickedness and Folly are of our Constitution. Cou'd we discover any one without this alloy, free from all Impurity ; with the *Image of God* fresh and entire upon his Soul ; we must conclude him to be some other Creature, not *Man*. For who can say, I have made my Heart clean ? I am pure from my Sin ? *In many things we offend all. There is none that doth good and sinneth not.* This is a melancholy Truth indeed ; a truth of which every one carries a *Testimony* in his own breast.

So it is ; the very *best* of Men are compassed about with Infirmities ; *Paul* and *Barnabas* declare themselves to be Men of *like Passions* with those at *Lystra*, And to convince us that they were indeed, Men of like Passions, in the very

very next Chapter, we read with what violence they broke out against one another; *the contention* (says the Text) *was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder the one from the other,*

St. Peter's denial of *Christ* is also an Instance of our Infirmary, and is therefore interwoven with the thread of our Saviour's Sufferings, as a caution to *us* to beware of too much Confidence in our own Goodness.

Good use is to be made of the *bad examples* upon record in the holy Scriptures; these things also *are written for our admonition*. There we read of the accomplished *King of Israel*, the *Man after God's own Heart*, whose Character is made up of meekness and courage, wisdom and piety; and yet he buried all those Glories in his Neighbour's *bed*; and fixed a deep and indelible stain upon his Honour with the blood of the innocent *Uriah*. So impotent, so frail a thing is Man. One fleshly Lust *prevailing*, throws down the tottering Fabric of all his Virtues. And what shall *we* do, if such great Men as *these* fall? If the *Cedars* be shaken, how shall the *Reeds* and *Bullrushes* of Religion stand?

Thus you see, that there is no Mortal without *Sin*; and in different Men, different Sins prevail. For instance, we find *Cain* stigmatized in Scripture, for *Murder*: *Simeon* and *Levi*, for *Treachery*: *Corah* and his Associates for

profaneness and *rebellion*: *Nebuchadnezzar's Pride*: *The Cruelty of Manassah*: *The Covetousness of Balaam*: *The Perfidy of Judas*, are set forth for Examples. And whosoever shall diligently observe to what Point his *desires* lean; what his *affections* are most warmly provoked by; what thoughts spring up of themselves in his Mind; what imaginations find the most welcome entertainment in his breast; what *Objects* effect him with delight, and immediately inflame his *Passions*; I say, whosoever shall thus inspect into himself, will easily discover his *darling Lust*; or, in the words of my Text, *the Sin which doth so easily beset him*.

I presume there is not *one* but carries about him plentiful matter of these Temptations; which he must not expect to be *free* from 'till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption. But then, wicked Thoughts, (though continually obtruding themselves, if not consented to) are so far, I believe and hope, from being *Evil*, that they are the exercise of our *Virtue*, whose business it is to Check and Repel them. Utterly to *exclude* and bar the Door of our Hearts against them, is beyond the measure of flesh and blood, consequently not *required* of us. So that the difference between one Man and another, in this respect, lies not *herein*, that the *bad* are subject to these Lustings and the *good* exempted from them. *Both* are strongly Plied with Temptations adapted to their

their respectively prevailing Lusts ; but whilst the *bad* Man is gently carried down the stream of his vicious Inclinations, the *good* Man tuggs and rows with all his might against it.

'Tis matter of common Observation, that the *Devil* is daily watching to take *advantage* of us ; suiting his Temptations to the different Tempers and Circumstances of Men ; applying himself to the *governing Passions* by the grateful *Objects* of them. These are the *feeble* parts of our Nature, and therefore the most advantageous landing port of our *spiritual Enemy* ; *here* he finds us ready and disposed to receive him ; our Hearts are open, and our Affections bid him welcome.

It were heartily to be wished that we were as careful to *defeat* his Attempts, as we are not *ignorant* of his devices. But it goes *against* us to Kill and Crucify our *beloved Lust*, which courts us with such bewitching tenders of Satisfaction. To cut off the *right hand*, and pluck out the *right eye*, (in a *literal* Sense) is not a greater violence to Nature. But, *dear* as our favourite Sin is, I must proceed in the

Second Place, To shew the extreme danger of *Indulging* this our beloved Lust.

Virtue has ever been esteemed a steady, constant, and uniform Principle, Therefore, St. *James* tells us, that *whosoever shall offend in one Point*, (ie knowingly, wilfully, habitually, offend) *is guilty of all*. Cou'd a Man indeed,

carry his Obedience so far as to sin but in *one* Point, (which is the case supposed by St. *James*) yet so long as he harbours *one* darling bosom Vice, in hopes that the *Lord* will *par-don him in this thing* ; *all his Righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned* ; but in the *trespass that he hath trespassed, and in the Sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.*

"Till our *Duty* comes in competition with some *valuable Interest*, or *prevailing Passion*, we cannot take the *measure* of it. But where our *Interest* or *Pleasure* stand in competition with our *Duty*, how is every the most base and wretched thing preferred before *Christ* ? How often do we determine, as the *Jews* did heretofore, *not this Man but Barabbas* ? Such was the Policy of the *Gadarenes*, who, for fear of loosing their *Swine*, besought *Jesus* that he would depart out of their *Coasts*.

Is the Sin (preferred before *Christ*) dear and useful as the right hand ? Why, it is no *extraordinary* thing, when the right hand is likely to corrupt the whole Body, to cut it off and cast it from us ; that we may preserve the maimed Trunk, and die a little later. And is this severity not to be borne in order to save the *Soul*, and secure it from the danger of infernal Punishment ? This is certain, to enjoy the present Satisfaction of *Sin*, and yet to escape *Damnation*, are two things utterly inconsistent, and according to the Word of God, *impossible.*

St.

St. Paul has enumerated the several Sins, which exclude from the Kingdom of God. *Be not deceived*, says he, *neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* It is not necessary, it seems, in order to the attainment of *Damnation*, that we add to our *Intemperance, Uncleannefs*; to *Uncleannefs, Idolatry*; to *Idolatry, Extortion*; to *Extortion, Envy*, and the like; and so to complete the *body* of Sin, in *all* its parts: *One* beloved Lust will supply the want of all the rest; and as surely bring to the *same* end, as if a multitude of *other* Sins were called in to its Assistance. So one mortal stab will effectually *Kill* the Body; without mangling every limb. I wou'd not be understood here, to mean *accidental* Failings or Surprize, or even some deliberate and wilful acts of Sin. But this I say, every beloved Lust heartily espoused, indulged, and *continued* in, will defeat all our Hopes of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The *Gospel Covenant* has treasures of *Mercy* for those who have not obeyed the *Law*, in the strictness of *unerring Obedience*. *Evangelical* Righteousness shall be accepted where the *legal* is not to be had; but then, we must take care to make honest and punctual payment of the *evangelical*.

Seeing

Seeing then, the *best* of Men are surrounded with Infirmities, which they can no more part with, than they can shake off their Flesh: Can it be matter of wonder to any *Christian*, if he find himself not only tempted to Evil, but incessantly urged and stimulated to the commission of it? Or need he, as not knowing the cause of his inward struggle between Inclination and Duty, enquire with *St. Paul*, how it comes to pass that *he sees a law in his Members, warring against the law of his Mind, and bringing him into Captivity to the law of Sin?* This is a case far from being new or uncommon. The *utmost* Man can pretend to, is not to fall totally and finally. But to get *above* Temptations, out of the *reach* of the allurements of Sense is (as I said just now) beyond the measure of Flesh and Blood. What then? Shall we lie down in sloth, complaining of our weakness, but use no endeavours of recovery? Or, shall we charge the blame upon God the author of Nature? No, he made us upright, depravity and corruption are the work of our own hands.

Still, at the worst, our case is not *desperate*; nor are we sunk into a *total* Degeneracy. Though our Inclinations to *Vice* are strong; yet it is our fault if we are *enslaved* by them.

To swim against the current of impetuous desires, and to turn Nature from its bent, it must be confessed, are no easy undertakings, not to be effected with cold Wishes and lazy Hands.

Hands. But a vigorous *resolution* will do the Business. Old sturdy habits will give way to it, much more will it prevail to check our vicious Inclinations, and stop their growth into Habits.

Let us then, search and examine in which of our Affections we stand most exposed to Temptation; which Passions give the most frequent alarm to our Virtue; and what is *the Sin that doth so easily beset us*. Here lies our greatest Danger; here then, let us post our whole Strength, and implore the assistance of Heaven to protect and defend us. Let us not (in the *Apostle's* phrase) *beat the Air*, but single out our favourite bosom Lust; and let us level all our *Arrows* against it. Let us go out therefore, against *Satan*, as *David* did against the *Philistine*, in the *name of the Lord*; and let us cut off the Head of our spiritual *Goliath*, and make an offering of it worthy of God. This is a Sacrifice resembling, by a faint Similitude, that of *Abraham* when he offered his Son *Isaac* upon the *Altar*. Take notice how highly God was *pleased* with this noble act of Faith and Obedience. *Now I know*, says he, *that thou fearest God; and, by myself have I sworn, that because thou hast done this Thing, in blessing I will bless thee*. A declaration which we may be bold, in some measure, to extend to all, who at the command of *God*, are ready to give up what is most Dear and Precious to them, and so
shall

shall entitle themselves to the Character of *Abraham's Children*, who is the Father of the faithful.

But, alas! how *few* Copies are to be found of this fair Original? Every *darling Lust* is dearer to us than *Isaac* was to his Father *Abraham*, and we *won't* strive to conquer the Affections of Nature.

Let us weigh the Danger against the enjoyment.

If the Sin be pleasant, yet it is not so to be in *Hell*; is it profitable? But will it countervail the Loss of *Heaven*? Shall we accept of such base momentary Satisfaction, in exchange for our immortal Souls? Far be it from us to be deluded into so foolish a Choice!

If therefore, we are in earnest, and indeed resolved to Mortify and Kill our *beloved Lust*, let us pinch and starve it by degrees; add no fuel to the Flame, but cut off all Occasions that may give advantage to the *Sin* which doth already, but too easily *beset* us. Let us be frequent and assiduous in the exercise of that Grace which is most opposite to our darling Lust; and so, by degrees, nourish a virtuous Habit, in order to root out and supplant its contrary. Above all, *Watch and Pray that ye enter not into Temptation*, nor fall under it.

Simon, sleepest thou, in this article of Danger? *Judas* doth not sleep. The Emissaries of *Satan*, are up and busy, ready to betray and apprehend

apprehend us. Watch therefore, and Pray, and assure yourselves that your Prayers shall not return unto you *Void*, but shall accomplish your desires and *Prosper in the thing whereunto you send them.*

Let us begin therefore, and go on in the power of *Faith*, of *Watchfulness*, and *Prayer*; nor be discouraged at our frequent backslidings, and manifold failings, in the conquest of our beloved Sin; *the sin which doth so easily beset us.* Allowance, 'tis to be hoped, will be made by that *God* who *knoweth whereof we are Made*, and *remembereth that we are but dust.* But let us not go back, much less quit the field. *God* will at last, give us the desired *success*; *Grace* and *Peace* here, and eternal *Happiness* hereafter.

Let us then, my Brethren, constantly implore the Divine Assistance to guard and protect us, in every station of *Life*; that his *Grace* may always prevent and follow us; and make us continually to be given to all good Works.

I conclude with that most earnest and passionate wish of *St. Peter's.* *The God of all Grace, who hath called us to his eternal Glory, by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered a while, (strugling and maintaining a doubtful Fight against your spiritual Enemy) make you perfect, strengthen, stablish, settle you.*

And now, O thou eternal, inexhaustible Fountain of all Goodness! Thou Father and Friend of Mankind! Hear the Prayers of thy
Y humble

humble Servants, and grant us Grace to withstand the *Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and with pure Hearts and Minds to follow thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*: To whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour, Glory, and Power, now and for evermore. Amen.



S E R M O N



SERMON XI.

THE
GREAT IMPORTANCE
OF

Integrity of LIFE,

IN ORDER TO
MAN'S HAPPINESS.



Job xxvii. 5th and 6th.

'Till I die, I will not remove my Integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.

JOB makes a resolution here, of maintaining an unprejudiced Mind, and keeping a Conscience void of *offence*: He is resolved to behave himself *prudently*, and not to be guilty of any thing that would either sting his *Conscience*, or wound his *Reputation*, were it to be exposed to human knowledge.

And this resolution he takes in the height of Adversity and Disgrace; when his *Wealth* and *Children* were snatched away from him; when his Servants and Friends *despised* him; when he was afflicted with pains and ulcers, and had no place to lay his head. In the midst of this unhappy change of things it was, that this good Man resolved to stand the brunt, to remain unmoveable, unshaked, and to keep his Ground even until Death. For *'till I die*, says he, *I will not remove my Integrity from me.*

As if he had said, “ Though it be my hard
 “ fate and the determined Will of Heaven,
 “ (which he knew he cou’d not fathom) that
 “ I should be thus severely dealt with all my
 “ Life ; yet my chief Care and Study shall be,
 “ to maintain an unprejudiced Mind : not to
 “ repine under the dispensation of Heaven,
 “ nor to be guilty of any thing that wou’d
 “ offend my *God*, or lay me open to human
 “ Censure.”

Here ! is a pattern worthy of the imitation
 of all Mankind ; for it shou’d be every Man’s
 care, to carry such a temper of Mind with him
 out of *this* World, as may procure and improve
 his happiness in the *next*. Neither the prospect
 of Wealth, or Honour, shou’d prompt him to
 the commission of any thing that is unjust :
 But in the whole course of his Actions, and
 above every other blessing, he shou’d value and
 prefer a *good Conscience* ; and (though in the
 height of Misery and Distress) he shou’d re-
 nounce all *external* advantages, rather than for-
 feit so invaluable a Blessing. And now that I
 may enforce this upon your Minds, I shall,
 from these words of *Job*, take occasion, in the
First Place, to lay before you the great im-
 portance of integrity of Life, with respect to
 Man’s present happiness, in *this* World.

Secondly, With regard to his eternal Happi-
 ness in the World to *come*.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I shall shew, that by the Grace of God, every Man may (like *Job*) hold fast his Integrity, if he will use his *endeavours* to do so.

Fourthly, and *Lastly*, I shall conclude with an exhortation, that you may be persuaded to hold fast your Integrity to the end.

I am in the *first* place, to lay before you the great importance of integrity of Life, with respect to Man's present happiness in this *World*.

And this will very soon appear if we consider, that none of the *Riches*, *Honours*, nor *Pleasures* of this World, can afford *Happiness* to a Man who is attended with an *evil Conscience*; for let him go where he *will*, and do what he *can*, still he is attended with disquietude and anxiety of Mind. Is he *Rich* and *Prosperous*? He can never enjoy his Riches with *Satisfaction*, nor his Prosperity with *Pleasure*. Is he in an *honourable Post*, and attended with Crouds of *Admirers*? All this will not appease the stings of a *wounded Spirit*. Perhaps he stifles the alarms of Conscience, with a continued round of *sensual Pleasures*; at *Balls*, and *Feasts*, in *Drinking* and *Carousing*, and every other fashionable Amusement. But, alas! what will this avail in the Day of *Adversity*, or at the Hour of *Death*? What has he to support him, if he shou'd be brought to the Calamity of an *adverse Fortune*? He has not the Integrity of *Job* to befriend him. And, when he has a vast *Eternity* in view, and feels himself sinking into the gloomy Regions

Regions of Darkneſs, how muſt the dire forebodings of his guilty Soul make him Tremble and Quake, in expectation of meeting with the juſt Reward of his Actions ?

It is impoſſible for me, or any one upon *Earth*, to deſcribe the Agonies of Conſcience at that Hour, when the diſconſolate Sinner is brought to reflect upon an ill ſpent Life.

But when a Man, like *Job*, gives his Heart no room to reproach him, and is determined to hold faſt his Integrity, he is prepared for all events of Providence.

If he is *Rich* and *Honourable*, he enjoys his Riches with *comfort* and *ſatisfaction*; and his *Virtue* gives a luſtre and dignity to his high Station. And, though he has the opportunity of enjoying the Pleaſures of Life, as well as other Men, yet he uſes the good things of this World, without *abusing* them. He is ever ready to adore his *Creator*, and perform all poſſible Acts of *Kindneſs* to his fellow *Creatures*.

The Integrity of his Heart leads him (after the example of holy *Job*) to compaſſionate the diſtreſſes of the *Poor*. He will not withhold from them their deſire, but the Fatherleſs ſhall partake of his Bounty; neither will he ſuffer the *Poor* to periſh for want of Cloathing, nor the *Stranger* to Lodge in the Streets, nor the *Traveller* to go without Refreshment. By this, he is a comfort to himſelf, a *bleſſing* to his Family, and a *Friend* to all Mankind. And if he ſhou'd
happen

happen to meet with *Adversity* and *Affliction*, he is resign'd to the Will of his *Creator*, and comforts himself with having acted uprightly.

For let it be considered, that no *outward* Calamity can disturb that Man, who is attended with a *peaceable Conscience*; which is perpetually ecchoing to him those comfortable Words, of *Well done thou good and faithful Servant*: Thou hast acquitted thyself as becomes a *Disciple* of the Saviour of Mankind, like *him* thou hast manfully resisted Temptations, and courageously bid Defiance to the frowns and to the flatteries of the World and the Devil.

Happy! unspeakably happy, is the Man that is in *such* a case; he has no need of *Company* to replenish his Mind, and relax his Thoughts; nor need he have recourse to *Drink*, to heal the Wounds, and drive away the stings of an offending Soul: For he is always carressed, always attended with the pleasing reflections of a well spent Life.

This was the consolation of *Jab* during his *Adversity*; under a most dismal and shocking Change of things; when the World (that but a few hours before smiled upon him) seemed now to be bent upon his eternal Ruin.

He found upon a review of his Life past, that he had walked *uprightly* with his God; that neither his *Wealth*, nor strength of *Constitution* (which are great Temptations) had led him to affront his *Maker*: And, though (for
reasons

reasons best known to the eternal Governor of the World) he was driven from the height of *Prosperity*; to the depth of *Affliction*; yet thus did he comfort himself, *My Righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go, my Heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.*

Integrity of Life yields a Man the most solid and lasting Peace and Satisfaction, and is his Friend in the greatest Time of Need. When he falls, like *Job*, into any great Calamity, his greatest support is that of a good Conscience; when he can apply those comfortable Words of St. Paul to himself, that *in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, he has had his Conversation in the World.* Then all will be calm and serene within. The black Clouds of Melancholy and Despair will be dispersed, and a bright Sun shine will ensue.

Amidst the greatest storm of Adversity, a peaceable Conscience spreads an inexpressible *Calmness* over the Mind; a serenity of Temper refreshes and smooths it; every rising murmur is *bushed*, every repining thought *quashed*, and all the Passions of the Soul brought to an entire resignation to the Will of Providence. And at the *Hour of Death*, how unspeakably *reviving* must it be to the drooping Spirit, to reflect upon a *well spent Life*; to think that when *this earthly Tabernacle is dissolved*, the Soul will

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be received by the blessed *Jesus*, into the blissful Regions above.

It was a great comfort to *St. Paul*, when the time of his departure was at hand that he could, with confidence, say, *I have finished my Course with Satisfaction; I have kept the Faith in integrity of Heart; and now I am ready to depart and be with Christ my righteous Judge, who hath laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness.* What Joy, what Satisfaction can equal this? And may not this happy disposition of Mind be attain'd by giving our *Hearts* no room to *reproach* us? Yes surely. This will be the Happiness of every faithful follower of Christ, who hath, like *Job*, retained his *Integrity* to that awful decisive Hour, when he shall pass from this transitory Life to an endless Eternity. He will then feel the *unspeakable* Satisfaction of a well spent Life, which will stand him in more stead than all the *Riches*, and *Honours*, and *Pleasures* of this World. And this leads me in the

Second Place, to shew, that *Integrity* of Life is of the utmost Importance with regard to our *eternal* Happiness.

And this is very evident to any one that is acquainted with the *Christian Religion*, which teaches us, that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* For as Heaven is a state of uninterrupted Felicity, no *evil* thing can be admitted there; because that would be an interruption

tion to the *Happiness* of its blessed Inhabitants; and as Sin is the *worst* of Evils, it of course, can have no place in *Heaven*: Therefore, it nearly concerns every intelligent Being, to divest himself as much as possible of all Impurity, while he is in this Life, that he may be the better prepared for the Happiness of the next.

And how is he to *do* this, but by performing the *Conditions* of the Gospel? And they are *Repentance* towards God, *Faith* in the *Merits* and *Satisfaction* of the blessed *Jesus*, and a *sincere* *Obedience* to the eternal Laws of Truth and Righteousness. *Except we Repent*, Christ tells us, *we shall all Perish*. *Whosoever believeth in him* (ie Jesus Christ) *shall receive remission of his Sins*. And, *Blessed are they who do his Commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life*. These being the *Conditions* by which we are to obtain eternal Happiness, we must be careful, not only to *resolve* to observe them, but we must bring those good resolutions into *Action*.

But Men, in general, *forget* the Obligations of Christianity, and seldom think seriously 'till they are thrown upon a bed of Sicknefs. And how often do we see Men, who upon their *Sick Beds*, have bound themselves under an *Obligation* to become good Christians, if Providence should spare them their Life; yet, as soon as they have been able to relish a *pleasing*, or to comply with a *suitable* Temptation, they have

basely renounced their Promise, and sold their *Innocence* for a trifle.

But we must take it for granted, that *Guilt* can never be blotted out, but by such a *Repentance* as will produce a *virtuous Life*; for no *Vice* can be pardoned 'till it is *mortified*; and he who sees the *error* of his ways, *resolves* and *prays* against it, and yet, still goes on in his *Wickedness*; *contradicts* his own Purposes and Petitions; and all he gains by it is, that he is *condemned*; and he may, with as much reason, wish for Life, whilst he cuts his Throat, as pray his Soul into *Heaven*; whilst his *Morals* are wicked.

If Religion consisted in making *fair Promises*, there wou'd be but very *few* irreligious Men; for, now and then, a man may be seriously disposed, and without much *Difficulty*, might promise a Reformation hereafter. But this is not laying *the Ax to the root of the Tree*; for the *Lusts* must be *mortified*; the *Passions* *subdued*, and the *Flesh* brought in Subjection to the *Spirit*: without this, all *Religion* is vain, and *external Pretences*, are of no Significancy. *If thou vowest a vow to God, defer not to pay it (says the Preacher) for he hath no Pleasure in Fools.*

Our *Conversion* is dated from the time that our *Lusts* are *mortified*; our *Minds* *changed*, and our *Appetites* *subdued*. For to *resolve* and not to *practice*, betrays a hasty, rash, and injudicious
Mind;

Mind ; that considers not what he says, as well as intends not what he promises ; and he that imagines himself in a happy condition, because he (now and then in distress) promises amendment, is miserably deceived, and will find to his Cost, that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.*

For when we shall be roused from the Sleep of Death, to appear before the great Tribunal of *Christ*, it will be no Service to us to plead, that we many times *resolved* to do well ; for nothing will do then but *virtuous Actions* ; and we shall stand or fall in the next Life, as we have behaved ourselves in *this* ; according to that saying of the *Apostle*, *We shall all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, every Man to receive according to the deeds done in the Body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.*

And since this is the case, what manner of Persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and *Godliness* ! How careful should we be to maintain our *Integrity*, hold fast our *Righteousness*, and give our *Hearts* no room to reproach us.

The Day that will determine our Fate, is hourly approaching us ; and as every Moment of our Lives is a step to the Grave, where there is no Work, no Device, no Repentance ; we shou'd set about subduing our Lusts, and maintaining a Conscience void of Offence towards God.

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To *postpone* this 'till *to-morrow* is dangerous ; it is a Danger too great to admit of any delay ; for we know not what a *Day* may bring forth ; and whilst we are speaking *Peace* to ourselves we may be alarmed with a Summons into another World, and be brought before the dreadful Tribunal loaded with Guilt.

Alas ! too many, 'tis to be feared, are now, like *Dives*, tormented in Flames, who had deviated from the Paths of Righteousness, and went astray in the broad Road of Sin and Wickedness ? Had they, like holy *Job*, retained their Integrity, and given their Hearts no room to reproach them, they had never had reason to deplore their wretched Condition in a state of Misery.

And, that it is in the power of every Man, by the Grace of God, to hold fast his Integrity, is what I am now to make appear under my

Third general Head. And such is our Happiness, that though our grand Enemy has power to tempt us, yet he cannot oblige us to Sin ; he lays the Bait, but can't compel us to swallow it : For he tempted our Saviour to Worship him, with the pleasing prospect of *all the Kingdoms in the World*, and a promise that he should be Master of them ; but he was rejected with Scorn and Disdain. He made use of many an argument to draw *Job* from his Integrity ; but mist his aim. He tempted *Joseph* by the power of a lustful Woman, but could not prevail :

vail : From whence it is plain, that if we forfeit our *Innocence*, the blame lies at our own Door.

We might, if we pleased, have been deaf to his Arguments, and rejected his Temptations, with that inimitable Argument that *Joseph* made use of ; for, said he, *How can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God ?* We might stem the Current of our evil Inclinations within, and manfully reject the Baits that are laid for us without, and, as *Job* did, *maintain our Integrity, hold fast our Righteousness, and give our Hearts no room to reproach us.*

Job was sensible of the *Depravity* of Mankind. He knew their Passions were irregular, their Wills stubborn, and their Lusts predominant. He knew also, that the *Devil* (knowing the hopeful Condition of Man, that if he behaves himself well here, is capable of being happy hereafter) was *envious* of him, and was his bitter Enemy. He had experienced the Arts which that *accursed Fiend* has recourse to, in order to draw Mankind from their Innocency, and make them like himself, miserable to all Eternity. For he saw that he inveigled the *Voluptuous* into his Snare, by the fair and flattering Promises of *Delight* ; that he had *Gold* to enchant the *Covetous*, *Kingdoms* to allure the *Ambitious*, *Tinsel* to dazzel the *Gay*, and *Flattery* to work upon the *Proud*. And, knowing these things, he bravely *resisted* Temptations, and,

and, by the Grace of God, *overcame* them; he gloriously supported his Integrity, and therefore was in the end, blessed with more abundance than he ever possessed before; and died in a good old Age, full of Days, and in favour with God and Man. And is not this a powerful Inducement to us to act like *Job*, and bravely withstand our spiritual Enemy? What should hinder, but that we may, as *he* did, *maintain our Righteousness, hold fast our Integrity, and give our Hearts no room to reproach us?*

The *Devil*, it is true, consults the *Passions* of Mankind, and lays his baits suitable to *them*. He knew *Cain* to be envious and proud, and so induced him to embrue his hands in his Brother's Blood. He found *Peter* to be Cowardly, and so prompted him to deny his Master. *Judas* he perceived to be Covetous, and by that means, led him to betray the Saviour of the World. *These* are the methods he has recourse to, in order to make Men as miserable as himself. But notwithstanding this, we may, if we please, *resist* his Temptations, and baffle all his evil Designs.

If we ply constantly at the Throne of Grace, and implore the divine Protection, we need not doubt but that the kind Father of Mankind, will give us such a measure of his *Grace* and *Holy Spirit*, as may enable us to withstand all the Temptations of our spiritual Enemy.

But,

But, alas! the *contrary* too often prevails. Men are seldom upon their *Guard*, and are so far from *resisting* the solicitations of the Tempter that they readily suffer themselves to be *led Captive by him at his Will*, and seem resolutely bent upon their own *ruin*. And though they *know* that a virtuous and good Life is indispensibly necessary to Salvation, yet they live in wilful impieties, and indulge themselves in gross and confessed Wickedness; some of them wallowing in Lust and Wantonness, others in Drunkenness and Debauchery; some gratifying their Pride and Ambition, others their Envy and Malice; some sacrificing to their Filth and Luxury, others to their Avarice and Covetousness: And how can such People look into their Breasts without the deepest Horror and Despair? But indeed, they *fly* from their angry Consciences as much as possible, and seldom think of *amendment* 'till they are either worn out with the long pursuit after a debauched Life, or 'till they are suddenly seized with a dangerous fit of *Sickness*. The unhappy Condition therefore, of such Men, makes it the more *necessary* for me, as was proposed, in the

Last Place, to exhort you, in the name of God, to hold fast your *Integrity* to the end.

But surely, one would imagine, there is but little need for *many* Arguments to press us to such a necessary Duty, when our *Souls* are at stake; whose present and eternal *Happiness* or

Misery, depends upon our good or bad management of them ; and, if we *lose* them, we lose our *All*, and shall have no possibility of recovering them.

What ? Is not the comfortable Satisfaction which flows from an *honest and good Heart*, preferable to the stings of a *wounded Spirit*, the inseparable Companion of *Vice and Wickedness* ? Is not the *Death of the Righteous* to be chosen before the *miserable end* of an abandoned Sinner ? I believe all of us will readily subscribe to the Wish of Baalam : *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last end be like his !* But, if ever we expect this, we must be careful to *Live as becometh the Gospel of Christ*. Like *Job*, we must *hold fast our Righteousness, retain our Integrity, and give our Hearts no room to reproach us*.

I most heartily wish, that we would all consider how some Men now do, and we *ourselves* shall hereafter, *tremble* at the thoughts of such folly ; when at the hour of Death, we shall think on the equal Distribution of things at the Day of Judgment. For this is not a *fictitious*, but a *real* Event, towards which all wise Men look forward ; lest, like the rich Fool in the Gospel, (*who laid up Provision for many Years*) they should be surprized by these Words : *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee.*

It

It is a most melancholy reflection to think of the inconsideration of some Men; who, though they *know* that they must certainly *Die*, and afterwards appear at the great Tribunal, yet never consider what will become of them there, when they hear that dreadful Sentence pronounced, by the Judge of all the Earth; *Depart from me, for I know you not, ye workers of Iniquity.* What horror and amazement must then seize upon the *condemn'd Sinner*, when he finds himself carried away to a gloomy Prison of exquisite Torture, there to remain to all Eternity. Alas! he will then (when it is too late) be convinced of his Folly and Madness, and *call to the Mountains and Rocks to fall on him, and hide him from the Face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:* For when the great day of his Wrath is come, who, or where is that impenitent Sinner that *shall be able to stand in his Presence?*

Be persuaded then, my Brethren, to consider these things in *Time*; and reflect seriously to which of these two fates, *Happiness*, or *Misery*, your present Course of Life tends to bring you. Such a Time will certainly come, and nothing will be of service to you then, but the answer of a good *Conscience*; that you have manfully resisted the strongest Temptations, been patient under Afflictions and Disappointments, and resolutely stemmed the Tide of your evil Inclinations; that you have *retained your Integrity*

as long as you lived, and gave your Hearts and Consciences no room to reproach you. Then you will triumph for ever with the glorious Company of the Apostles, the goodly Fellowship of the Prophets, and the noble Army of Martyrs, and all the Saints and Servants of God. And Oh! what Heart can conceive, what Tongue can express the inconceivable Joy and Happiness which the righteous Man shall possess in the presence and enjoyment of that God, in whom is all fullness of Joy, and at whose Right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore.

Let me therefore, my Brethren, to conclude, exhort you by all means, to keep in Mind the unspeakable reward of a virtuous and good Life. Let Heaven and Happiness, which deserves all your Care, engross it principally before every other thing; there let us place our Treasure, and there will be our Hearts. And let every Man of us take up the resolution of Job, and with him say, *'Till I Die, I will not remove my Integrity from me, my Righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my Heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* That we may all think of these things, and steadily adhere to the most admirable Precepts of the Gospel, all the Days of our short stay upon Earth; let us humbly beseech the Almighty, to bestow upon us such a portion of his holy Spirit, as may support us in all Dangers and Difficulties, that we may thereby be enabled to
bold

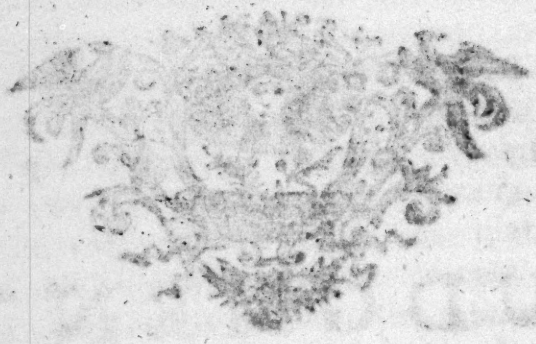
bold fast our Integrity to the end; which (thro' the merits of our blessed Saviour) will not fail to bring us to the happy Regions of the Blessed. Now to God the Father, &c.



S E R M O N

Selfishness, leading to the end, which (since
the merits of our blessed Saviour) will not fail
to bring us to the happy Regions of the Blest.
Now to God the Father, &c.

THE MOUNTAIN



THE MOUNTAIN

THE 1st Judgment. 192

SERMON XII.

THE

L A S T

J U D G M E N T.

Acts xvii. 31.

Because he hath appointed a Day in the which he will Judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.

TO know *Jesus* and him Crucified was, to *St. Paul*, a matter of the utmost Importance; and it can be no less important and necessary to have a true knowledge of *God*; this being the *corner Stone* of Religion, the chief Motive and Support of Moral Virtue.

To know *God* is not barely to know that he *exists*, but to conceive of him as a Righteous and Merciful, Just and Impartial, Powerful and Unchangeable Being: And, not only to consent to these Truths, but to give all his *Attributes* their just Weight and Scope, and retrench them of nothing that is essentially in them.

To endeavour to reconcile and arbitrary and oppressive Proceeding, with the Attributes of Justice, and Impartiality, is plainly to set the divine Nature and Attributes at Variance; it is
to

to affirm that the *Deity* is all Goodness *within*, though nothing but Evil and Malignity appear *without*; that God has bowels of Mercy, and is *intrinsically* Kind and Compassionate, though *outwardly* he is ill-natured, Captious and Contentious; Assertions that combat with and destroy each other.

To treat our Friends or fellow Creatures with good Words and good Manners, is prudent and decent; since they have no way of judging of us, but by our outward Behaviour. But, to what purpose do we make use of Compliments and fine Words to an omniscient Being? When, either for want of knowing what is *implied* in those Words; or else, for want of giving them their full Force and Meaning, we throw the most glaring Affront and palpable Indignity upon him.

This was an Error the Athenians the wisest of pagan Nations were infected with. They ascribed to God the Attributes of Wisdom, Purity, and Compassion; and at the same Time, their divine Worship consisted in Ceremonies so ridiculous, so Impure, and so Inhuman, that, instead of *honouring* the Deity, they tended to paint him in the most mean, despicable, and horrible Light; such as (one would now think) had been the contrivance of premeditated Malice in order to *reproach* and *defame* him.

In this state it was, that St. *Paul* found the People of *Athens*, to whom this Discourse,

from whence my Text is taken, was directed. This City was a Place of Learning, Liberty, and Superstition; and, as the *Chapter* informs us, *Curiosity*: For we are told, that *not only the Athenians themselves, but the Strangers which were there, spent their Time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new Thing*; a Disposition which it were to be wished had ended with themselves. But be that as it is: These People had been so bewildered with the Variety and Multiplicity of *strange Gods*, which *Philosophers* and *Magicians* (taking advantage, no doubt, of their fickle and curious Disposition) had introduced amongst them, had fixed, at last, upon some *supreme Being* whom they Worshipped under the Character of *the unknown God*. This, the *Apostle* observing, took Occasion to make the same full Discovery of this *unknown God*; the same display of his awful and amiable Attributes, which had been communicated to *himself* at his miraculous *Conversion*.

Ye Men of Athens, says he, *I perceive that in all things ye are too Superstitious. For as I passed by and beheld your Devotions, I found an Altar with this Inscription: To the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly Worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the World and all things therein; seeing that he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, dwelleth not in Temples made with hands: neither is Worshipped with Mens hands, as tho' he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all, Life and Breath, and all things.*

From

From this refined and spiritual Description of the divine Nature, the *Apostle* infers the folly and absurdity of *their* pagan Ceremonies and Superstitions; and, by way of Conclusion, presses them to Repentance by the powerful Arguments in my Text, *Because God hath appointed a Day in the which he will Judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath Ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.*

Many arguments have been drawn from Reason, to prove the certainty of this future Judgment; but as all that hath been offered on that head, by the wisest of the antient Philosophers, was *inconclusive*, amounting only to a moral Probability; those, who wou'd endeavour to illustrate this Truth, must rely entirely upon Scripture; the matter being capable of no other proof or evidence.

Indeed, the whole mediatory undertaking of our blessed Saviour, and all the Circumstances of it, are matter of pure Revelation; 'tis the bidden and manifold Wisdom of God, which none of the Princes and Philosophers of this World knew any thing of; and we should have known as little of it as they, had we been left to our own Reason, and not bless'd with a divine Revelation. The Enemies of revealed Religion indeed, ascribe our superior knowledge of the Deity and his divine Truths, to the proper cultivation and improvement of Reason; though nothing is

more arrogant, nothing more ungrateful, nothing more evident than the Contrary.

It cannot be denied, but that there were Men of as great Parts and Learning in *Rome* and *Athens*, when in their meridian of Splendor, as in the Dominions of any *Prince* since those Days. To what advantage then do we owe our superior Light, unless it be to the publication of the *Gospel*.

But not to confine our remarks to Men of *Learning*, for Religion was not designed for such alone, but for the *unlearned* also: The common People of *our* Time, are taken up with their *Trades* and *Occupations*, and have as little leisure and abilities for *Study*, as the common People among the *Romans* and *Athenians*; and yet, (as I observed to you just now) the *Athenians* were made up of folly, obscenity, and barbarity. But enquire now from the meanest *Mechanic*, and he will tell you that there is a *God that made Heaven and Earth*; that this God is a *wise, righteous, and compassionate* God; and that an *honest Heart* and a *good Conscience*, is the best recommendation to his favour.

Now, I should be glad to know what it is that has opened the Eyes of the World? What it is that has supplanted these notions so *subversive* of Virtue and true Piety, if the *Gospel* has not done it? 'Till we find it attributed to some other Cause, we may justly place it *there*; and therefore if the Gospel of Christ has dispersed the erroneous and superstitious Principles

of *Heathenism*; and introduced worthy and adequate Conceptions of the Deity *instead* thereof; surely, nothing but Ingratitude, or the most abandoned and corrupt Principles can prevent our giving a due Attendance to, and Approbation of its Doctrines.

Let us now see what the *Scriptures* say of this future account. And, for methods sake, we will divide this Discourse into three Heads. In the

First Place, We will see what Assurance the *Scriptures* give us of a future Judgment.

Secondly, Consider the *proceedings* of that Day, together with the candour and equity of the Judge.

Thirdly, We will take notice of the *Rewards* and *Punishments* consequent thereupon. And

Fourthly, Of the *Day* set apart for that purpose.

First, We are to see what Assurance the *Scriptures* give us of a future Judgment.

Our blessed Saviour, when he was discoursing to his Disciples of the end of the World, inform'd them that at that *Time the Son of Man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do Iniquity. And shall cast them into a furnace of Fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth. Then shall the Righteous shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of his Father.* Here our Redeemer is represented as the chief Minister of God's Justice, in the distribution

tribution of Rewards to the Righteous, and Punishment to the Wicked; and though the *Effect* and *Execution* of the Sentence only be expressed, yet it supposes a judicious Proceeding.

Thus likewise we read, *For the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his Father, with his holy Angels, and then he shall reward every Man according to his Work. Shall come in the Glory of his Father, ie with his authority committed to him.*

Then again, our Saviour speaking of his coming to Judge the World, expresses himself thus: *Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven; and then shall all the Tribes of the Earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory: ie in order to Judge the World.*

Our Saviour, in the next place, produces his *Commission*, and tells us from whence his Authority was derived to him: *The Father judgeth no Man, but has committed all Judgment to the Son, to whom he has given Authority to execute Judgment, because he is the Son of Man.* St. Peter declares, that God commanded the *Apostles* to *Preach unto the People, and to testify, that it is Christ that is ordained to be the Judge of the Quick and Dead.* And St. Paul, in the words of my Text, declares that God hath appointed a Day in the which he will Judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, (ie Jesus Christ) for it follows, *whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.* In

In short, all *St. Paul's* Epistles are pregnant with threatnings and promises resulting from this future Judgment. Thus he speaks to the *Thessalonians*, *The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son, who shall be punished with everlasting Damnation from the presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.*

Thus we see what assurance we have of a future Judgment. This is a Doctrine that is the Soul and Spirit of Religion; for what doth the notion or belief of a *God* signify, if he will not trouble himself to take notice how Men behave themselves here? If he will neither Reward nor Punish, *Virtue* is then but an empty Name; a needless Penance which Men impose upon themselves; and the vicious and debauched are as safe and secure, as their *Lives* seem easy and delightful.

But as there is a Judge, who distinguishes the Actions of Men *here*, and will indeed, judge the World *hereafter*; then those who have Sense, must know their Interest; this awakens their Consciences, assuring them, that Piety and Virtue are absolutely necessary, and of the greatest Importance to their Souls hereafter. But this will appear more fully by considering, as was proposed,

Secondly, The proceedings of that Day, together with the candour and equity of the Judge,
for

for which we must also, be beholding to the *Scripture*: There we are told, the World will be judged in *Righteousness*.

In human Tribunals, there is a distinction between the courts of *Law* and *Equity*; but there are no different Judicatories in the *other* World; for there, *Mercy* and *Truth* kiss each other; *Law* and *Equity* proceed from the same Mouth, from the same Throne; there will be no arbitrary Proceedings; none will be acquitted, none condemned, by a strain of *prerogative*, or any unjust measure in the Judge; no he will govern himself by the justice and equity of the cause: This, he himself, hath declared. *All the Churches*, says he, *shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and the Heart, and will render to every Man according to his Works.* And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the *Corinthians*, assures us, that we must all appear at the *Judgment Seat of Christ*, to answer for the things done in the flesh, whether they be Good, or whether they be Evil.

At which time, though God does not expect from Men the perfection of *Angels*, nor to reap but in proportion to what he has sown; yet, by the improvement of those *Talents* he hath afforded, he expects to find a difference in the attainment and temper of those he consigns to a different state for Eternity. And, although, as St. Paul tells the *Romans*, those that have sinned without Law, shall Perish without the Law; and such as have sinned under the Law, shall

shall be judged by the Law; yet still the proceedings are just and equal, because they are according to Men's Deeds, and proportionable to their Opportunities of doing Good. If this were not so, that Day could not be called a Day of Judgment, but rather a Day of Execution; and the whole transaction, a demonstration of Will and Power, and not of Righteousness and Integrity. Besides, why is the Judge called a *searcher of Hearts*? Why is he said to *separate the Sheep from the Goats*? Or, why is he called a *fiery Trial*, if he makes no discrimination, no difference, but Saves and Damns by determination? No, we may rest assured that *the Judge of all the Earth will do right*; he is capable of no fondness, partiality, or indulgence; will be wrought upon by no Flattery, moved by no Complaints, corrupted by no Bribes.

This our Judge is acquitted of, every where in the holy Scripture; and particularly the *Apostle St. Peter*, who (by reason of his *Jewish Education*) had formerly thought God Almighty had neglected and despised all nations but the *Jews*, proclaims with admiration, that *of a truth God is no respecter of Persons, but in every Nation, he that feareth him and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him*. By which it is plain, that the great *Crisis* of Eternity, depends upon a holy Temper: upon a virtuous and pious Life.

I have but *one* observation more to make upon this Head, with respect to the righteous Proceedings of the Judge; and that is, the *candid Interpretation* he will put upon our Actions. As no Laws are tolerable when they are rigorously strained, and severely applied; so none are harsh and difficult that meet with a fair and equitable Interpretation.

Now, in reference to this, the whole tenor of the Gospel assures us, that our merciful God will watch no advantage against us; will not insist upon *Punctilio's*, but principally looks at the sincerity of our Intentions; and will advance our good offices to as high a value as they are capable of. For thus he expresses himself, when speaking to those on his right Hand: *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World; for I was an hungred and ye gave me Meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me Drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in Prison and ye came unto me.* And then, when the Righteous (wondering at this divine Goodness, and modestly under-valuing their own Performances) shall answer, *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred and fed thee; thirsty and gave thee Drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked and clothed thee? When saw we thee Sick, or in Prison, and came unto thee?* The Judge graciously replies, *Verily I say unto you, in as much*
as

as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Hence we see, that our Saviour and Judge, not only takes notice of the *meanest* Offices, and the easiest expressions of Charity and Compassion, but *remembers* them for us when we have *forgotten* them : And that, at the most advantageous Season, when he comes in all his Glory with *Crowns* and *Kingdoms* to bestow ; in the most important and *critical* Time, when our *Eternity* depends on it.

Our Judge will make such allowances that the Justice of our Cause will bear ; he will not look upon *defects* in our Duties, as wilful Contempts of his Laws ; nor will he deem our *frailties* and *infirmities* as presumptuous Sins. What ? (says he to Peter) *could you not Watch with me for one hour ? Watch and Pray that ye enter not into Temptation.* And when he returned from praying, and found his Disciples *still asleep, for their Eyes were heavy*, how graciously does he *palliate* this failing ? *The Spirit* (says he) *indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak.* Hence it is plain, that such *infirmities* as are consistent with a divine Life, with a sincere Love of God, and a true and hearty Sense of Virtue and Goodness, shall not be rigidly aggravated against us. I shall now, in the

Third Place, Take notice of the *Rewards* and *Punishments*, which are the Consequents of the proceedings of that Day. And they will be proportioned to the Calamities and Suffer-

ings of Men in this Life. St. Paul tells us, that *as one Star differeth from another in Glory, so also is the Resurrection of the Dead*; and our Saviour assures us, that *in his Father's House are many Mansions*; not only room to receive many, but, as that Phrase properly imports, several *degrees and stations* of Glory; so that, they who suffered *most* here, through Poverty, Sicknes, or any other Calamity, will be freed from their Sorrows, and shine forth with an *extraordinary* ray of Glory hereafter: Thus we see how the Almighty clears up and vindicates his Providence.

As to the *nature* of these Rewards and Punishments, that is entirely *conjectural*; and whatever is offered as a particular Description of them, is as much the product of *Fancy*, as any of the flights that we meet with in the antient *Poets*. We are certain of nothing more than what is exhibited to us in Scripture. The habitation of the *Virtuous* is there represented by a *City*, a *Kingdom*, a place of *Rest*, a *Paradise*; all that can give us an Idea of Grandeur, Delight, and Happiness.

On the contrary, the dwelling of the *Wicked* is described by *unquenchable Fire*; a *never Dying Worm*; a *bottomless Pit*; terms, the most horrible and affrighting to human Beings. And the manner how we shall become capable of receiving our merits; whether in the same *Bodies* in which the *deeds* were done, or in such *other Bodies* as God shall please to cloath our
Souls

Souls at the morning of the Resurrection; though it has furnished matter of *Controversy* amongst the learned in *Metaphisicks*, I look upon it to be a matter of indifference to us; since the Soul will be equally capable of happiness or misery in *any* Body that the Almighty shall give it. How Body and Spirit act reciprocally upon each other, and the manner by which their correspondence is supported in this Life, never *has*, and I believe never *will* be explained. How then, shall we pretend to demonstrate the nature of their Junction after Separation?

St. Paul tells us, that God *shall change our vile Bodies that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body*; but wherein that *likeness* consists, we are at a loss to determine; and as neither *Christ* nor his *Apostles* have thought proper to tell us, there is no necessity of placing the opinion of Men (fallible as ourselves) in the Christian *Credenda*. We see that God has promised to reward the Virtuous, and punish the Wicked in another Life; and we know God *can*, and *will* do what he promises. Let us therefore be more careful to avoid the punishment, than to dive into the *Nature* of it; such *secret things belong unto the Lord our God*: Leaving them then to the divine Wisdom, I pass on to the

Fourth and *Last* thing proposed, namely the day set apart for this disquisition.

The Text tells us, that God hath appointed a *Day* in the which he will judge the World. No doubt on't, but as the Day of *Christ's first* coming

coming was immoveably *fixed*, so also, is that of his *second* coming to judge the World; but Christ tells us, that of *that Day, or Hour, knoweth no Man; no not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only*. After a declaration so plain and so positive, *modesty* I think, might prompt us to let the event of that promise ripen in the womb of Futurity.

God, no doubt, thought proper to keep the World in *Ignorance* as to the precise time; and *two* of his Reasons (amongst many others best known to his infinite Wisdom,) may be *these*.

First, That he might keep the negligent World on their *Guard*, who are too apt to put *far* from them that terrible Day. And

Secondly, To keep up the *Oeconomy of Life*; for if the precise day was known beyond all uncertainty, and *it* so near our time that we could count the number of our Days, and be *certified how long we have to Live*; we should be like so many *Criminals*, whose time of Probation is fixed; and who, in consequence thereof, wou'd spend our whole Time in *preparing* for this important Day, and neglect to provide the *common necessaries of Life*, which (without the interposition of a Miracle) would hasten the *Period* of the World, and frustrate the purpose of God.

To Conclude. As Christianity gives us assurance of the *Resurrection of the Body*, which those who were instructed by *reason* only, knew nothing at all of; and even has furnished us
with

with a glorious *Instance* of it, in the Resurrection of Christ. Since the *reward* that Christianity proposes, is worthy of God; an inheritance undefiled with misery or vice; a state in which we shall be fitted for the most exalted employments and pleasures: let us thankfully *Cheerish* this glorious Hope; entertain it as the sum of all our Wishes, the completion of all our Joys.

Of such vast moment was it to the wise St. Paul, that he *counted all things but loss and dung in comparison of this one thing, that he might, by any means, attain unto the Resurrection of the Dead*; unto an *happy* part in that Resurrection. How earnestly did he *press toward the mark* (through all manner of Afflictions, Necessities, and Distresses) *for the Prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus?* And what did not the old *Patriarchs* gladly do? What did they not most willingly Suffer that they might attain a *better Resurrection?* And shall not the hope of this, prompt us to make our Peace with God, and by an effectual Repentance, abandon all the ways of Sin for the future?

But if such examples be not sufficient to lead us to a preparation suitable to the Importance of the *Trial*, perhaps, the thoughts of what must infallibly be the result of our petulant Follies, wilful Miscarriages, and treacherous Infidelity, may have some Effect upon us. Let us then, suppose ourselves just raised from the Sleep of Death, by the *Arch-Angel*; imagine the trum-
pet

pet Sounding, and these awful Words pronounced, Arise ye Dead and come before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that we were *now* standing there to hear our past and forgotten Sins called to remembrance; to see our most hidden and disguised Actions rightly judged and rewarded; where is that harden'd Sinner that wou'd not be covered with Shame and Confusion? Where is that abandoned Sinner whose Countenance wou'd not change, whose Conscience wou'd not sting him with remorse, and whose guilty Soul wou'd not shudder at his approaching Doom?

Let me exhort you then, my Brethren, to be always mindful of that awful Scene; may you always remember, that however distant that Day of general reckoning may be, yet with regard to *individuals*, it may be fixed to the Day of Departure out of this World; since after that, *there is no Work, no Device, no Repentance*; but as the tree falls so it will lay.

I shall therefore conclude all in the Words of our blessed Saviour; *Watch ye therefore, (for ye know not when the Master of the House cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning) lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.*



F I N I S.

